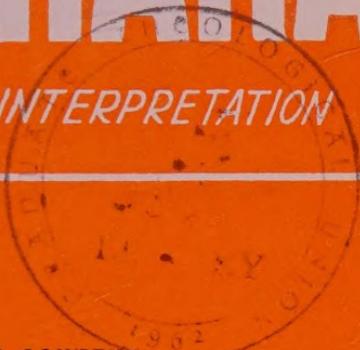


JEEVADHARA

A JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION



SALVATION IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT

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THEOLOGIZING IN INDIA TODAY

J. C. Manale

PAULINE APPROACH TO THE CONCEPT OF SALVATION

Joseph Pathrapankal

HERMENEUTICS AND THE WORLDLY AND TRANSCENDENTAL UNDERSTANDING OF SALVATION

Othmar Gächter

THE SOCIOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF BUDDHISM

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SALVATION AND THE MISSIONARY CONTEXT OF INDIA

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JEEVADHARA

The Meeting of Religions

SALVATION IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT

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Editorial

In this issue we are presenting some of the papers given at the annual conference of the Indian Theological Association held at Kristu Jyoti College, Bangalore, June 13–15, 1980. The theme of the Conference was "Understanding Salvation in the Indian Context." J. C. Manalel in his presidential address gives a brief survey of the situation of theologizing in India today.

The first task in studying salvation is to have a working definition of the term itself. As Raimundo Panikkar explained in his keynote address to the conference, salvation is one of the essential and basic realities that cannot be properly defined in concepts, cannot be objectified into a thing out there to be empirically analyzed; nor can it be reduced to a simple subjective experience, removed from all possibility of objective examination. It is the final stage of man's life, the end and final conquest that can only be indicated in symbol, and hence needs a certain mythicization. The ideals of absolute Being, perfect Image, and inmost Atman, representing the Greek, Hebrew and Indian traditions respectively may be taken as the basic models of that mythology. For that very reason its proper understanding needs a certain demythologization, though that same understanding can be communicated or conveniently expressed only through a remythologizing process. Besides, in the Indian context salvation has to be understood against the background of the cosmological assumptions of time and space, the anthropological suppositions and especially what Panikkar termed as the Christic insight of each tradition.

It was again pointed out by Panikkar that the source for the Christian answer to the problem of salvation cannot be the Bible alone especially in the Indian context. Christianity is not a religion of the Book. Categories used by the Bible are not exactly those in which the unique Indian experience is expressed. The text of the Bible answers only those problems that were put to the text, and they are not necessarily the same as those raised by the Indian people today. Hence the attempt to draw

answers for all the modern problems from the Bible may be actually reading them into the Bible. In answering, therefore, the problems of salvation in India today we must look for the 'irreducible Bible' of universal religious experience. Christian approach to salvation should start with a recognition of the thirst for salvation in all men and in all religions. The answer to this thirst begins with a real sharing first on the material level, initiated by the Incarnation in which the Divine Word took our flesh and blood, and for us today it means getting actually involved in the life and problems of our fellowmen. This sharing must proceed to an intellectual level where we earnestly endeavour to understand the human beings as persons. As the story goes, the first requisite for teaching mathematics to Gopal is not a knowledge of mathematics but a knowledge of Gopal. This intimate knowledge of people can be attained only by a deep sharing in their culture and religious values.

But for Christians the basic source for understanding salvation is the Revelation in Jesus Christ, the Saviour of all men, Joseph Pathrapankal's paper on the "Pauline Approach to the Concept of Salvation" provides this necessary introduction to the Scriptural view of salvation. For the Indian context, Othmar Gächter complements it with an hermeneutical investigation of the concept of salvation with particular reference to Hindu thinkers.

The important issue, however, for an Indian theology is how to make the Christian message of salvation truly incarnate in the missionary context of India. Efforts at renewal in the Indian Church after Vatican Council II have been concentrated, as in the West, mostly on the areas of liturgy, catechetics and pastoral organization, which were the strong points of the Council. But, unfortunately, good many elements of Christian teaching today are relevant only if we accept the Euro-American world view, view of history, geography, economics, technology and culture, e. g. the division of Christianity into sects, a competitive approach to other religions, and an individualistic and deductive approach to Scriptural sources and Church tradition. Traditional Christian theology is theoretical, Church - centered in its missionary approach, conservative in its social impact, does not take into account the time dimension and is mostly the preserve of

the clergy. A shift has to be effected to theology that is more action-oriented and man-centered, assessing the forces operative in a situation, thinking of goals, strategies, tactics, timing and grouping of persons, and taking into account the pace of events and their input into decision making. To meet the problems posed by a fast changing world our theology itself should be continually in process, and yet preserving the authentic values of the past.

In India this means that meeting the socio-political challenges of today we must take seriously into account the traditional religio-cultural context of Buddhism and Hinduism, with which even the social perspectives are imbued. Hence the conference gave special attention to the Buddhist and Hindu approaches to salvation. Richard De Smet studies Buddhism as a pointed response to the social situation of Buddha's times. Perhaps the most important task of Indian theology is to find the meaning and scope of the Church's mission in the service of the Indian masses. My paper on Salvation in the missionary perspective is an attempt to examine the relevance and special orientation of mission work in India today.

Another important point of discussion at the Conference was the socio-economic and political situation of India in which a large section of the people live in abject poverty and exploitation with the ever widening gap between rich and poor. All agreed that this is a situation of sin, whether recognized or not, which the Church should repent and atone for. The situation has become more complex by the Asianisation of revolutions and counter-revolutions inspired by ideologies like Marxism and revivalist religious movements. In the discussions it was strongly pointed out that it was simplistic to apply the dualistic and Marxist sociologies of the West and Western ideas of revolution and liberation to India, where the great majority of people follow the monistic sociology of complementarity, according to which all receive their endowments and functions from the one common Ground of Being and are obliged by Dharma to contribute their best to the service of others. The Indian social situation is not one of class war between rich and poor, masters and slaves, but of tension and reconciliation between

castes, classes and communities; Sara Grant discusses this broader view of liberation in the Indian religio-social tradition.

Neither the papers presented here nor the theological Conference as a whole provide any neat definitions or easy answers to the problem of salvation. Their main scope was to raise problems and to conscientize the people about the missionary task today. The concluding paragraph of the statement given by the theologians at the end of the Conference on this question brings out this point:

"We feel the Indian Church should honestly ask itself the following questions: What do her presence and apostolate in the midst of the Indian masses contribute to their integral vision of life and salvation? In what ways can it help to accelerate the process of liberating people from the present situation of frustration, poverty and exploitation? How can it motivate the people to take an active role not only in the achievement of their spiritual salvation but also in a radical transformation of the economic, cultural and social situation in order to bring it into conformity with the dignity of man? In what way can we draw inspiration from the deep insights of Indian religions like Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism, which are an enduring sign of man's striving for total liberation. We feel it the specific role of the theologians to challenge the conscience of the community to listen to the Spirit speaking to it through the concrete situation. This would make theologizing in India an ongoing process of rendering the Mystery of Christ alive and ever more incarnate."

Theologizing in India Today

We are living in 'One World'

The world, in the 20th century, has undergone a radical change which some call 'mutation'. There has been an 'explosion' of knowledge in every field of science in its widest sense, and of communication media reaching to the farthest ends of the earth and beyond; and the consequent change in outlook and life. Every action in any part of the world has its reaction in the other. It seems, humankind has come of age and, for the first time in history, we are living in 'one world'. This fact we can ignore only at our risk. One world means that no individual or community or country or religion can shut itself out from others, that the whole humankind (with the rest of creation) must move together, pull together and drive together towards a common destiny. This conviction has been thrust upon most of us by force of circumstances, by the kind of discovery, progress and development that this century has witnessed.

Pluralism and the need for dialogue

Apart from this basic conviction with its consequences, one world does not imply a unity of outlook or conception or vision. Pluralism is the order of the day, as against plurality or uniformity. Hence the need for dialogue. In fact, the Church was forced to it. It should not have been so. Openness through dialogue with deep respect for others' freedom should ever have been an essential feature of a Church which was conceived, by its founder, as a brotherhood open to all nations¹, where law is love² and authority service³. Dialogue, however once started, seems to be running its course, and walls of separation and exclusion, built up through centuries, have been crumbling down. Today we witness an imposing series of interreligious and intrareligious dialogues - Hindu-Christian, Buddhist-Christian, Muslim-Christian etc.

1) Mt 23:8-10 and 28:19

2) *ibid* 22:38-40

3) *ibid* 20:25-28

India's contribution to world theology

There is no other country in the world as this that offers such a rich possibility for dialogue. Everywhere in India there is not merely a sprinkling of all World Religions but an intermingling of them, which gives them the occasion and opportunity to be enriched and to enrich one another. Ah! there is the rub! For most people, dialogue is only a get-together. For them, those who engage in it and those who organize it need not be solidly grounded in their own faith or have an experiential knowledge of it. This may do more harm than good.

Real dialoguers must go to the extent of listening to the religious experiences of one another, I may even dare to say, to the extent of experiencing one another's religion in the deeper mystery of Reality. Thus dialogue helps them not only to know one another's religion, but to deepen one's own religious insights and experiences.

Indian Christian and Hindu-Christian theologies

If dialogue does not attain that much perfection, I doubt if we can fully realize our objective of an Indian Christian theology to which we all aspire, as it is a kind of incarnation. If, however, the dialogue reaches that height, there is even the possibility of a Hindu-Christian Theology and, for that matter, also a Buddhist-Christian and a Muslim-Christian Theology. And I hope there will come a time when Christian Theology will have 'entered into the religious experiences of other World Religions and have related them in their uniqueness to Christianity'⁴. This is not eclecticism or reductionism. Nor is it an adapting of Christian doctrine to other religious traditions, but a relating of the latter to the former. Even with all such dialogues, it may be noted, only exceptionally competent scholars like Raimundo Panikkar can do the pioneering work and he has done it. Through many of his lectures and writings, climaxing in a book-size article in *Jeevadharma* 49, he has laid the foundation of a Hindu-Christian Theology - a theology valid for both Hindus and Christians. Panikkar says in his characteristic modesty: "Unlike a single personality starting a new religion, this

4) cf. Ewert H. Cousins in *Cross currents*, Vol. XXIX, No. 2, 1979, p. 145

new theology is a corporate phenomenon. It is a symphony of many voices.”⁵

Theologizing in India

Theology can be built up only by theologizing. To be well-informed in theology is a pre-condition for theologizing, but it is deep theological thinking and thorough theological discussion that go to constitute it and the consequent shaping of an Indian Theology. In the past 30 years ‘Theology Centre’ has been trying to arouse a theological awareness and to foster theological thinking among our people through its varied programmes. Afterwards the NBCL Centre together with its Regional Centres have been doing it much more widely and much more frequently. The theological reviews such as *Indian Journal of Theology*, *Indian Missiological Review*, *Indian Theological Studies*, *Jeevadhara*, *Living Word*, *Religion and Society*, *Vidya-jyoti*, *Word and Worship* and others, each in its own way, have been helping and accelerating this process of theologizing.

Jeevadhara, as its subtitle: “a journal of christian interpretation” clearly suggests, has been, from its start in 1971, trying to do three things: first, to invite Indians to enter every field of theological thinking and writing and thus to promote the habit of serious Christian reflection in the interpretation of life and all that concerns it; secondly, to have everything Indian studied and discussed in depth from a theological point of view; and thirdly, to elaborate a theological approach or method of our own.⁶ *Jeevadhara* has about fifty theologians on its editorial board.

Indian Theological Association

In this connection I may speak a word on the objectives of the Indian Theological Association which was started in 1976 through the initiative of the ‘Theology Centre’. Some of them are: to be a forum for theologians to meet and discuss current theological issues; to promote the development of an Indian Christian Theology; and to foster research in matters of religion

5) *Jeevadhara*, January–February, 1979, p. 59

6) Cf. *Jeevadhara*, May–June, 1971, p. 197

and society. The theologians who formed themselves into the Association showed that they really meant business by demanding strict requirements for its membership, such as (a) post-graduate degree in religious studies, (b) active involvement in Indian Christian theology, and (c) publications of recognized standard. Already forty of our theologians are on the membership list.

Though we have no dearth of theologians, there has been little inter-communication among them. We have not yet tapped all the potentialities of discussing together, of submitting our views to mutual criticism, of supplementing our specializations with those of others, of cross-fertilizing our ideas, and of interpersonal sharing of our mutual insights and experiences.

Present topic

'Salvation' is one of the most fundamental topics that need serious study and discussion by theologians, especially in view of the complex situation of present day India. Here, after the political independence from the British dominion, the focus of attention has, for the last thirty years, been on the cultural, social and economic liberation of the people in sharp contrast to the intense yearning after spiritual salvation of the millennia-old tradition of India. As regards spiritual salvation different religions like Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity have different concepts and different approaches.

Having discussed in our past sessions : methodology of theologizing in India, centrality of religious experience in the Indian theological thought, and uniqueness of Christ and religious pluralism, we shall have to analyse the concept of salvation of the whole man in the concrete situation of India and discuss the different issues therein involved.

Pauline Approach to the Concept of Salvation

In a discussion on "Understanding salvation in the Indian Context" a biblical topic such as 'Pauline approach to the concept of salvation' is just one approach among others, such as the Synoptic approach, the Johannine approach or even the Old Testament approach. Since this is the only paper bearing on the biblical approach I shall first of all touch on a few basic aspects of the biblical concept of salvation as such. Pauline approach is to be seen as part of this general approach, though it has its own uniqueness and importance.

First of all, the biblical concept of salvation is always understood as "salvation from" with its idea of deliverance, rescue from a dangerous, chaotic situation. Even the creation story of Gen 1 is presented as a salvation of order out of a chaos, out of the *Thohu wabohu*. It is more a negative than a positive concept.

Secondly, the biblical concept of salvation is very much a *hamartiology* - salvation from sin. A *supralapsarian* approach to soteriology is very much lacking in theological reflection. We have the story of creation followed by elevation and then came the fall, and consequently God plans the salvation of mankind, the climax of which takes place in Christ who through his death and resurrection brought the salvation of mankind. More-over, sin in this presentation is understood exclusively as a violation of a divine order, the disobedience of man transgressing a divine command.

I personally feel that this defective understanding of Sin as transgression, to a great extent, forbids us to have a correct perspective of salvation. Sin is more than transgression. It is, to use a Greek word, *akedia*, carelessness, laziness, a take-it-easy attitude. The sin of Paradise is not so much the transgression of a divine command as the total and irresponsible way

the first human couple (s) took the half-truth and the half-lie statement of a creature, cunning as it was (Gen 3:1). The human race created in God's image and likeness to rule over the created world and exercise its dominion over the world (Gen 1:26-31) in one moment behaves as a slave of a creature, and acts as the Serpent tells them. It is sin, not the sin of violation, but the sin of irresponsibility and carelessness.

Here perhaps we have the point of departure for a correct concept of salvation. Salvation is not so much liberating man from a pitfall, from a precarious fallen existence as making man and woman act authentically in accordance with the divine image and likeness they are supposed to carry with them. Salvation is a constant and continuous process of man and woman becoming authentic, whether it be through their own efforts or through a divine intervention, depending on the area where this authenticity has to be realized and attained.

A third basic aspect which we hold about the biblical concept of salvation is that salvation is something spiritual, something other-wordly and all what takes place here below are only symbols and signs of that real and unique salvation, that is of the soul. Thus the deliverance of Israel from Egypt is only a sign of what Christ was later to do by delivering mankind from sin. What Christ did through his healing the sick, raising the dead back to life, and by feeding the hungry are either miracles to prove his divinity or are at the most signs of his healing our sins, raising us from our sins, and feeding us with a spiritual food.

Terminological observations

The above aspects characteristic of the biblical concept of salvation are somehow present in the Pauline approach also, at least we think that Paul must be having the same fundamental approach. The various words Paul uses together with the other New Testament writers for explaining the reality of salvation have all a 'salvation from' accent. Thus we have such words as redemption, reconciliation, expiation, liberation and justification, all having the meaning of a liberation from, a removal from, a setting free from, an undesirable, precarious situation. This is

especially true of the word 'redemption' where the buying back is very much emphasized. The technical words for salvation, *sozein* and *soteria* also mean keeping something from harm, preserving something from, and rescuing something from.

The question is this: Are we to understand the Pauline concept of salvation exclusively from these terms and the various usages these terms have in Pauline Letters? Trained as Paul was in the Old Testament tradition, it was natural for him to continue the post-exilic and intertestamental approach prevailing in Judaism. The Judaism of the post-exilic times was a greatly disillusioned community suffering under the burden of a foreign power. It was but natural that this community lost all interest in the terrestrial, material well-being of man. Paul had his thorough Jewish training in Jerusalem and he too must have been fascinated by the spiritual, otherworldly trends prevailing in Judaism. The apocalyptic trends gaining momentum in the post-exilic times only accelerated this pessimistic approach.

The post-resurrection Christian community, trained as it was in this apocalyptic context, had a hard time discovering the total content of salvation brought about by Christ. For some time at least, the whole accent of the early Christian theology was on the *parousia*, the glorious return of the risen Lord. Salvation was nothing but being saved from the apocalyptic fire and being with the Lord. In the early Letters of Paul we can still find the major accent on this eschatological concept of salvation (1 Thes 1:9-10). Thus in the Letters to the Thessalonians and in the first Letter to the Corinthians we find Paul emphasizing the 'waiting for' aspect of salvation (1 Cor 15:51-53; 7:26, 29, 31).

But when we come to the later Letters of Paul we can discern a more existential approach, and consequently a more concrete and realistic understanding of the concept of salvation. So Paul writes: "Now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor 6:2). Consequently to speak about the Pauline concept of salvation one has to enter into the complex area of Paul's world of thought. On the one hand he inherited the Old Testament outlook found in the LXX, and on the other hand he was trained in the Jewish world of thought. But he had at

the same time to translate into meaningful concepts the fundamental reality of what Christ did for the world, an understanding he had arrived at through his theological reflection and meditation.

The reality of salvation according to Paul

So what I want to do now is to prescind from all these terminological jargons that obscure the very reality of what Christ did, and to try to examine the profound implications of his life, death and resurrection as Paul understood it. It is what is called 'dynamic equivalent' in the science of translation. 'Christ saved us', or 'God saved us through Christ' actually means that 'we are made authentic human beings through what Christ did', that the fact and possibility for man to be authentic have been attained and realized through Christ. The task of biblical hermeneutics seems to be to interpret the biblical concepts limited as they are by culture, space and time, into intelligible concepts understood by the men of our times.

What does Paul understand by the authentic man? To understand this we have to analyse what Paul understands by the unauthentic man. For Paul the unauthentic man is one who has fallen short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23), someone whom he calls the *sarkinos*, someone controlled and guided by his lower nature. He is a sinner, not in so far as he has committed this or that sin, but because he has a basic tendency to be for himself, to be introvert, to be self-bound, earth-bound and time-bound. All what Paul criticizes as violation of the Law by the Jews (Rom 2:1-3:9) and the practice of idolatry and immorality by the Gentiles (Rom 1:18-32) are expressions of this basic sinfulness of humanity. Man's tendency to take refuge in the observance of the Law, his inclination to succumb to the law of human effort to become acceptable to God are all manifestations of his desire to be self-bound. He is someone who in spite of his basic desire cannot follow the dictates of the *pneuma*, the superior power within him.

It is not only the individual person who remains unauthentic. The two groups of humanity, the Jews and the Gentiles, forming two blocks opposed to each other, are also establishing

this unauthentic picture of mankind. Characterized by hatred and enmity, they forfeit the very purpose for which God created human race. Here again it is a question of Jews closing themselves within the framework of their existence as the chosen people of God and creating the wall of hostility against the Gentiles (Eph 2:1-12).

What Christ did was to establish within himself a principle of authenticity that can be attained by everyone. Christ in his humanity is the perfect model of an authentic man. 'He is the man for the others'. In his earthly existence he appeared in flesh, but he always remained united to the *pneuma*, the Spirit, that made him united to the Father. Through his death and resurrection Christ established an abiding and permanent principle and pattern of authenticity in humanity. The death of Jesus is not so much an act of satisfaction, expiation and reparation as the establishing of a new principle of authenticity in humanity and a source of this authenticity for everyone to attain it. Christ through his resurrection became the Spirit-Body and invites everyone to that level of the Spirit.

The supreme gift of the risen Christ, according to Paul, is the *Pneuma*, the Spirit, who is said to be the *arrabon* (2 Cor 1:22; Eph 1:14; 2 Cor 5:5) and the *aparché* (Rom 8:23) of our eschatological salvation. By receiving the Spirit into ourselves we are enabled to lead an authentic life. The letter to the Romans makes it amply clear how Christ liberates man and mankind from the slavery of sin (Rom 5:12-21), death (Rom 6:1-22,) and law (Rom 7:1-25) and makes them live through the power of the Spirit and makes them wait for the final liberation from the tragedy of death and corruption in the eschatological transformation of mankind and the created world (Rom 8:1-39).

This approach to the concept of salvation is not necessarily a *lapsarian* one as if the plan of salvation occurred to God only after the fall. Paul praising God for his plan of salvation writes: "Even before the world was made, God had already chosen us to be his through our union with Christ so that we would be holy and without fault before him. Because of his love God had already decided that through Jesus Christ he would make us his sons - this was his pleasure and purpose. Let us

praise God for his glorious grace, for the free gift he gave us in his dear son" (Eph 1:4 6). Here we have no idea of a God punishing the sin of mankind in his son. Here we have no hint of a God planning salvation because of and after a fall. The original and abiding plan of God was to have us all holy and blameless children before him. This he accomplished through his dear son, Jesus Christ, in his death and resurrection.

Existential aspects of salvation-life

Man made authentic through Christ is the conclusion of Pauline soteriology and the basis from which all Pauline *par-enesis* takes its argument and explanation. We shall analyse a few passages where Paul develops the idea of an authentic man exercising his capacities gained through Christ and his Spirit.

- a) *Rom 12:1-2; 3-21:* Here Paul explains the personal and social dimensions of growth an authentic christian should have in his day-to-day life.
 - (i) *Rom 12:1-2:* In his personal life a christian should be basically a transformed person whose whole life is a worship and sacrifice. He is one who does not allow himself to be controlled by the passing standards of this age; but is one who allows God to transform him internally by a complete change of his mind.
 - (ii) *Rom 12: 3-21:* In his social life he is one who accepts himself as he is and others as they are, loving others, respecting others, working hard and being not lazy. He remains joyful, patient in his troubles, sharing his belongings with others, opening his home to strangers. He asks God to bless those who persecute him; he is happy with those who are happy; he weeps with those who weep. He has the same concern for everyone.
- b) *Eph 4:11-16:* In this passage Paul exhorts the Christians to become mature people, growing up to the very maturity of Christ. He asks the Ephesians not to remain children, but to grow up in every way to Christ, who is the head. Here the aspect of the community growing together in Christ and

into Christ is emphasized. The salvation community is the Church.

- c) *Rom 8:1-39:* This chapter of the Letter to the Romans, hailed as the heart of the Letter, explains how the Spirit has to be the inner principle of life and action for every Christian. Through a comparison of the work of the flesh and that of the Spirit Paul illustrates the dialectics of Christian life as a constant struggle between the lower nature and the Spirit as the supreme gift of God and the basis of eschatological salvation. It is this Spirit who gives us the freedom of the children of God and enables us to address God as 'Abba, Father' (Rom 8:15) and encourages us to challenge the enemies of Christian life (Rom 8:31-39).

Was Paul an abstract spiritual theologian, speculating on the inner structure of the unauthentic man and exhorting him to be authentic? We would be totally misunderstanding him if we were to argue so. We have the famous story of the leaders of the Jerusalem Church - Peter, James and John - and the apostles of the Gentile mission - Paul and Barnabas - discussing about the course of action they have to take in preaching the gospel to the Jews and Gentiles. The Jerusalem leaders encouraged Paul to go ahead with his ministry among the Gentiles, but they requested him to remember the poor christians of Judea. Paul writes: "That very thing I was eager to do" (Gal 2: 10). What Paul means is that it was no new idea for him that he should help the needy christians. It was part of his understanding his mission as an apostle of Christ. That is why Paul organised several collections in the Provinces of Macedonia and Achaia and arranged that amount to be taken to Jerusalem for the poor christians there (2 Cor 8-9). For Paul man was a total integral being, and not a composite of body and soul. He never wanted to be the theologian of the soul.

Cosmic concept of salvation

This secular, wordly and material dimension of salvation is further seen as developed in Paul's thinking about the cosmic aspect of salvation namely, salvation as something affect-

ing the whole material creation. In Rom 8:19-24 Paul analyses the whole dynamics of the created universe and the children of God engaged in a mutual encouragement to have both of them eschatologically liberated and transformed. It is the whole man, body—soul, and the material universe together with him that will be finally saved and transformed from their tendency to death, decay and corruption.

In 1 Cor 15:20-28 also Paul analyses the process of God subjecting the hostile powers, the last of which is death, and thereby God becoming everything to everyone (*ta panta en pasin*). Christ the Saviour does it by destroying the power of death through his death and resurrection and subjecting his Kingdom here on earth to God, the Father.

Perhaps the most beautiful passage in which Paul has summarized his whole cosmic vision of salvation is Eph 1:19-20. Here Paul tells us how the whole plan of salvation is an ongoing process which will have its perfect realization only in the *pleroma* of the *kairos*, in the fulness of time. What God does in the fulness of time is nothing but to bring all things, all things in heaven and on earth, to Christ as the head (*anakephaliosasthai ta panta en to Christo*). Here we see the total, integral and cosmic dimension of salvation as an ongoing process having its final end in Christ, the Omega. God the Father guides the whole process in and through Christ, but at the same time in and through the process of history.

Towards a reinterpretation of the Pauline concept of salvation

The concept of salvation is today being reinterpreted in the light of modern anthropology, sociology, philosophy and psychology. Consequently the biblical concept of salvation also is in need of a reinterpretation, especially because that concept has been transmitted to us through the limitations of a language, culture and time far removed from our own. Moreover, later interpretations of the biblical concept did not fully take into account the various nuances the concept underwent in the process of its transmission through the centuries. This hermeneutical problem is today confronting biblical theology in general and the study of the biblical concept of salvation is perhaps

one area where we need to be very much open to change our established ideas and build up a new theology of salvation.

There is what is called the diachronical principle of interpretation to be matched by the synchronical principle of interpretation, the former always busy with the 'then' and the 'there' of a text or a concept and the latter always trying to see the relation of a text or a concept to the 'now' and 'here'. Our failure to do justice to both can create a real caricature of biblical interpretation and systematic theology.

What is the specific contribution of Paul towards an Indian theology of salvation? It is a difficult question to answer. But I would venture to say that Paul has given us the perfect analysis of the authentic man - and salvation for him is the attainment and exercise of this authenticity - this *Sakṣatkara..* Only within the context of each one becoming authentic and integrated can we think of doing anything meaningful for others and if we have to become instruments of salvation for others, we have first of all to become authentic ourselves. It is now the task of specialists in Indian philosophy to take up this thought and initiate further discussion and reflection. Paul has still something important to give us.

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Hermeneutics and the Worldly and Transcendental Understanding of Salvation

Introduction

The fact that religious traditions abound with questions on the nature of salvation and that different concepts about such a fundamental issue lead to confrontation between people, make it imperative to ask basic questions like: "What can we know?" "How can we know?"

These were fundamental questions for Sabara (a 6th Century A. D., pūrva-Mīmāṃsāka) when, in his concern for *dharma* he approached the problem of understanding texts. Some of his insights may contribute to a fruitful discussion of an Indian approach to "Hermeneutics and the worldly and Transcendental Understanding of Salvation".¹

Broadly speaking, the various elements of philosophical and theological hermeneutics have been discussed at length and with great accuracy in Indian tradition, although the term 'hermeneutics' has been introduced only recently in Indian philosophical circles². An assessment of these attempts would show

1. For discussion and detailed reference to this approach to hermeneutics see the Author's *Hermeneutics and Language - A Study in Sābara Bhāṣya*, Motilal Banarsiidas, (to be published in) 1981.

2. Cf. - Panikkar, R., Die Begründung des hermeneutischen Pluralismus im Hinduismus, in: *Kerygma und Mythos VI*, Bd. II, Hamburg, 1964, pp. 119-136.

- Pathak, C., Brahma Jijnāsā as a Fundamental Hermeneutics, in: *Bharata Manisha Quarterly*, 1 (1976) No. 4, pp. 13-27.

- Gregorios, P., Hermeneutics in India in the Light of the World Debate, in: *The Indian Journal of Theology*, 28 (1979) 1-14.

not only the importance of hermeneutical studies, but also that the specifically Indian approaches to hermeneutics are still in a rudimentary stage.

The present attempt seeks to give an outline of a hermeneutical awareness with reference to Sābara Bhāṣya (the earliest available work in the systematised form of Pūrvā Mīmāṃsā) so as to arrive not at a 'special' or 'regional hermeneutics'³, but rather to answer the question: What does it really mean to understand?

Some aspects of language

In order to understand, man has to live in his field of experience and look for its ultimate meaning.⁴ Whatever can be directly perceived and empirically verified, thus also named, belongs to that which is visible (*dr̥ṣṭa*) within reality. What is invisible (*adṛ̥ṣṭa*) is only known through *sabda* (word, signifying language, etc.), because "sabda speaks", i. e. makes known.⁵

One has to point out in this context at least one main characteristic of the relationship between *sabda* and *artha* (object, meaning), namely *autpattika*. This *autpattika*-characteristic involves a simultaneous, mutual co-existence of *sabda* and *artha* with regard not only to their foundation and origin, but also to their existence and function. The nature of language which is derived from *sabda* is therefore not the result of a mere expression of man's knowledge or understanding. The intrinsic nature of language connot be the product of imagination or even of a concrete experience. Language is not merely a vehicle that carries thoughts and messages from one person to another.

3. Chethimattam, J., Philosophical Hermeneutics, in: *Journal of Dharma*, 5 (1980) 64-79, p. 64.

4. See Sā. Bhā. 1. 1. 5.: "An inquiry into dharma is an inquiry for the sake of dharma; for it consists in the desire to know it."

5. *Ibid.*

However, this does not exclude the fact that language also has a communicative function.

To understand the origin, realm and goal of man's experience means to have access to the whole reality. Man can attain knowledge of what is visible in reality by sense-perception, yet the realm of what can be spoken of is larger. Language—due to the *autpattika*—relationship of *sabda*—encompasses everything that is. It includes whatever is invisible. And there is no third dimension that points out anything beyond language.

Language, therefore, can be considered as the very foundation of *jijnāsā* (hermeneutics) since everything that has been and can be understood has its support in and through language. In fact, reality as a whole will always remain in eclipse until *sabda*, i. e. language, prepares man for proper *jijnāsā*.

Understanding based on hermeneutical awareness

Jijnāsā (i. e. *tasya jnātum icchā*) can be viewed as hermeneutics in so far as it is involved in overcoming the tension that lies between the 'known' and the 'unknown'. One's familiarity with and estrangement from language call for *jijnāsā* so that a new view may emerge. Whenever reality presented through language is not obvious or evident for man, the wish and urge to know the real status of language and reality, i. e. *satyam*, seems to be realized only through the integration of the known and unknown elements of what is to be understood. This may take place, when man speaks and listens with the right attitude called for by language itself. To understand language means, therefore, to stand under its spell consciously, i. e. in hermeneutical awareness.

Language by its very nature does neither objectify nor subjectify the status of reality. It presents through *sabda* what actually *is*. Thus hermeneutical awareness does not manipulate that which is presented by language. Hermeneutical awareness when authentic, sees language and reality as one whole. It is the genuine disposition to attain the very nature (*svabhava*) of the object itself that is present through *sabda*. Hermeneutics, therefore ceases to be genuine, if it becomes an aid to me re-

production of an image or a mental construction of an object. Since it has its basis in the *autpatti*-relationship between *sabda* and *artha*, it will lead to no further estrangement. In other words, hermeneutics relies on the direct contact that exists intrinsically between language and reality. Hermeneutical awareness, therefore, rejects not only any idea of a conceptual reproduction, but also everything that goes against the status of reality.

It may be said that to make an object present without alienating it from its real status is the main target of hermeneutics. In fact, hermeneutics has to sustain the intrinsic function of language, namely to show and to indicate. It aims thereby, at overcoming the lack of understanding which is the consequence of a partial estrangement and familiarity between the speaker and the listener, a text and its reader, with regard to what is to be known. What has been distorted in one's outlook and horizon attains the status of self-evidence through hermeneutics. The object becomes known through *sabda*, that is to say, the object is understood in man's hermeneutical endeavour. This is vital because man masters his life best, if he does not ignore the full import or reality which is present in and through language, i. e. when man really understands that which is to be understood.

In hermeneutical awareness any description of an object, though it may be meaningful, loses its validity, if it is not understood in the way it is presented by language. It is thus imperative to pay careful attention to the twin dimensions of reality: the visible and the invisible. Man's interference with the visible or invisible dimension of reality leads not only to confusion, but alienates man from proper understanding. A denial of the invisible dimension, i. e. a restriction to the merely empirically measurable reality, is as fatal as any mental projection into the invisible reality. A 'distinctive' feature of an invisible object, for example, has no more value than a mere superimposition, even when it is denied in the final analysis. No description of the invisible leads to proper knowledge of reality, because any attribute (anthropological, anthropomorphic or *per viam negationis*) interferes with the status of the invisible dimension. Though *sabda* has a multi-dimensional or polyvalent mean-

ing, none of these meanings can render the visible invisible and *vice versa.*)

No doubt, the various *nyājas* or principles of textual interpretation contribute to the exegesis of a text, but their mere application cannot yet be called hermeneutical understanding. The *nyāyas* seem to be rather the outcome of an analysis, which is preceded by understanding. They may be said to be an integral part of hermeneutical activity itself. However, the *nyāyas* in themselves are not sufficient for hermeneutics in so far as they do not take into account the reader's involvement. Genuine hermeneutics should take into account not only what is proper to the text itself, but also to the reader's concrete experience in life.³

It is important to establish the actual meaning of the many possible meanings inherent in *sabda* (word), yet hermeneutical awareness consistently refuses to be involved merely in an intellectual grasp of meaning and a linguistic understanding of a text. Moreover, language does not primarily function as a designating power within a referential system, as *sabda* asserts what is really present. There is not here a meaning and there a being. This Indian approach calls for a hermeneutical awareness in which man participates fully and is entirely involved in the realization of *satyam* (truth). Hermeneutics thus becomes not a mere intellectual endeavour which can be considered apart from or alienated from the individual's involvement in reality and his commitment to what really is. It is, as indeed it should be, a part of the individual's concrete existence that is constituted by whatever he understands.

The proper understanding of a text is thus far from a mere polishing up of an (old) idea or a message which has been stumbled upon. It is not (only) a recapitulation of what has already taken place or a presumption of what is still to take place. It is itself a participation in reality here and now. Thus the understanding of a text in hermeneutical awareness is not the reading of signifying units as if they are signposts meant to lead towards what really was, is and can be. Language shows directly what is to be understood. Moreover, understanding is not to be reached fully by mere attestation, acknowledgement or ratification of an object, since the manifestation of an object

through *sabda* does not withhold its actual impact on the reader. Hermeneutics – in which the implementation, performance and action of understanding takes place – is not exhausted by a mere comprehension of data. That is to say, real knowledge gained by hermeneutics becomes evident in actual life. Any text in a very basic sense has an actualizing effect on the reader. Full knowledge, in fact, is only attained, when man's outlook and performance, i. e. his very life, are shaped by what is understood. Man is really constituted by his very understanding and sustains or constitutes what *is* at the same time.

The crux of understanding is thus strictly speaking not a matter of possessing correct interpretations of a text. An interpretation, it may be said, is not an additional feature of understanding, but is rather within the intrinsic process of *jijnāsā* itself. Genuine hermeneutics is thus the real response to what *is* and that includes also the response to actual life. Proper understanding can be called hermeneutical as it involves a permanent process of assimilation and appropriation of what is really and not ideally present. Man thereby sustains what is and what has an impact on life by overcoming alienation and estrangement, both in theory and praxis.

Salvation

The understanding of salvation in hermeneutical awareness is not an easy task. Keeping in mind the nature and function of language as the core of hermeneutical awareness one has to focus on the word 'salvation.' What does it disclose?

The word 'salvation' has to do something with the verb 'to save'. It can be traced back to the Latin *salvo*, *salvatum* and has the same roots as *salus* that presents 'safety, welfare, prosperity and health'. But does it connote the same object for a Christian who relies upon the bible? In biblical Hebrew 'salvation' is the translation of various words of which *yāsa'* seems to be the most important one.⁶ The root *yāsa'* connotes 'to be wide' or 'spacious', 'to develop without hindrance' and it shows thus 'deliverance, help', "just as conversely compression,

6. Fohrer, *sōzo*, *sōtēria*, in: Friedrich, G., (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. VII, Michigan, 1971, 965-1003.

confinement and constraint carry the sense of being oppressed".⁷ So, to move into the open, to make spacious means rescue from such bondage.

The Greek words *sōzein* and *sōtēria* are also translated as 'to save' and as 'salvation'. They have their meaning and object in saving, keeping and maintaining, protecting, benefiting, well-being, and welfare. It is preserving or restoring the integrity of whatever is. Salvation presents therefore a deliverance from or an admission to something. It shows also a preservation from destruction, loss or calamity.

The multidimensional or polyvalent meaning of salvation, as outlined above, is "to be taken out of a dangerous situation in which one risked perishing. According to the nature of the danger, the act of saving manifests itself in protection, liberation, ransom, cure, health, victory, life, peace...".⁸ It is with regard to the object that is present and understood through the word 'salvation' that the distinction between "worldly and transcendental understanding" plays a role of crucial importance. For understanding shapes our life and it is also a vital factor which unites or divides people. A major difficulty arises because the *artha* (object, meaning), that is co-existent with the *sabda*, is not always attainable within the visible dimension of reality. Salvation, for example, indicates a process and man reaches its goal or final stage only after death.

This might have led to two approaches to the understanding of salvation. First, a worldly understanding based upon empirically verifiable data and practical experience, and second, a transcendental understanding which goes beyond human knowledge. In both approaches man goes easily astray if he draws conclusions which deviate from the authentic sources of knowledge. To understand salvation, however, means to be firmly rooted in *satyam* (truth) that emerges when the presence of *sabda* and *artha* are identical and not distorted by man's response.

7. Richardson, A., *Salvation, Savior*, in: Buttrick, G. A., (ed.), *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, New York, 1962, 168-181, p. 169, col. 1.

8. Leon-Dufour, X., (ed.), *Salvation*, in: *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, London, 1973, 518-522, p. 519, col. 1.

In hermeneutical awareness one neither excludes nor supports - *a priori* - transcendental and worldly dimensions that may characterize understanding. In view of such characterization, one may speak of a worldly and transcendental understanding. Yet, if either of them is made absolute, it will bear interinsic fallacies. The so-called transcendental understanding is easily mistaken as a salvific orientation impelling man to take refuge beyond human and social relationships. Thereby reference is made to some powerful influence that is not only beyond human strength, but also totally different from man. Its realm is thought to be outside of the finite and beyond the realm of language. Words like God, Gods, the Absolute, the Reality, Brahman, etc. occur in the vocabulary of such insights. On the other hand, in the so-called worldly understanding of salvation, deliverance and help are subject to man's control and can be sought only within his possibilities. And any dimension beyond empirical assertion or scientific knowledge is ruled out. What is of immediate importance for *jijnāsā* (hermeneutics), is precisely that these two dimensions - the worldly and transcendental - are taken into consideration.

It has to be added immediately that some students of religion classify a transcendental concern as being totally opposed to a worldly concern and *vice versa*. Those who are better informed realize that in the great religious traditions, the transformation and liberation of society and the world, both in theory and praxis, are connected with a transcendental concern. That the so-called worldly dimension seems to pale into insignificance, by unduly focussing on transcendental factors as being distinct from and opposed to empirical life, depends on the emphasis. On the other hand to rely on empirical data and man's capacity of solving all problems and of setting himself free from bondage in the context of material and social structures, manifests a striving for a different goal. This does not mean that a similar concern about mundane security and well-being etc. are not to be included in a transcendental approach to salvation. Both ways taken to the extreme, seem to be opposed to the hermeneutical awareness as explained above. That is to say, *jijnāsā* will never reach its aim of knowing what really is. If either of the ways is followed exclusively, the understanding of salvation will always fall short of its object and of what it has to offer. Nonetheless, such a mutilated understanding may satisfy some people in their

effort to improve a situation. Within a limited scope they may rightly point out a real salvific effect based upon their 'understanding'. Even an erroneous view has its effect and impact upon people.

However, there seems to be no hermeneutical understanding of salvation at all, as long as one does not take up the concrete constraints and contradictions arising out of life situations to reflect and act upon them in view of what really *is*. In view of this, what are the viable solutions to be offered to man to live his life meaningfully? It is, therefore, important to investigate further the so-called worldly and transcendental aspects of understanding salvation, in the Indian context.

The problem of worldly and transcendent salvation

To come to grips with the complex problem of salvation one has to pay attention to the "human situation, the way to freedom and the goal".⁹ By asserting the true state of affairs, i. e. to understand really what *is*, the existential significance of salvation becomes obvious. Being aware of one's situation as it is, is part of hermeneutics.

It may be said in this context:

"The human being is *self-alienated*, i. e., afflicted by internal division, and that human freedom lies in the comprehension of the nature of this affliction and in the working toward *de-alienation*".¹⁰

This seems to be the common ground of mankind with regard to salvation. It includes in some sense or other, by logical necessity "freedom as pursuit of happiness and exercise of rights".¹¹

9. Cf. the three parts of K. Klostermaier's Swammikannu Pillay Endowment Lectures, Madras, 1969, published as *Liberation - Salvation - Self-Realization. A comparative study of Hindu, Buddhist and Christian Ideas*, University of Madras, Madras, 1973. (Quoted henceforth: Klostermaier, *Liberation*.)

10. Mansani, P., The Common Ground of Marxism and Religion, in: *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 16 (1979) 472-495, p. 473 (Quoted henceforth: Mansani, *Ground*).

11. *Ibid.*, p. 477.

Such a de-alienation that bears a strong worldly or secular concern which is not blended or complemented by transcendental features is strongly advocated in India, for example, by M. N. Roy, E. M. S. Namboodiripad, D. D. Kosamby and K. Damodaran. The alienation, i. e., a bondage, is mainly seen in the present state of the Indian social realities and is evident in the misery of the poor and their exploitation. It is pointed out that class - and foreign domination, imperialism, feudalism and capitalism with the corresponding economic interpretations delay or block dynamic, social progress as much as the false consciousness built up by religion, metaphysics and spirituality.¹²

Salvation would mean overcoming this self-alienation within the visible world. M. N. Roy's view is significant here:

"Human progress... has not been actuated by any eternal abstract idea, nor by the inspiration of a soul-being. It has been done, is being done and will be done by material forces."¹³

The goal of a classless communist society is achieved by class-struggle which seeks to free society from the 'intolerable condition of life' and 'to conquer more comfort, more enjoyment, more freedom for the human animal'.¹⁴ However, such objects of salvation depend upon a process in which man, nature and society are transformed. This insight of K. Damodaran is well expressed by M. M. Thomas:

"The transformation by man of natural, social and historical reality 'involves the transformation of his own powers over nature, society and history', and

12. The following outline of secular ideologies is mainly based on the thorough study by Thomas, M. M., *The Secular Ideologies of India and the Secular Meaning of Christ*, CLS, Madras, 1976. (Quoted henceforth: Thomas, *Ideologies*).

13. Adhikari (ed.), *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India*, Vol. II, New Delhi, 1974, p. 220 (Quoted henceforth: Adhikari) (Quotation by Thomas, *Ideologies* p. 103).

14. Roy in: Adhikari, Vol. I, pp. 174-75 (Quoted by Thomas, *Ideologies* p. 103).

in this process he creates not only nature, society and history, but 'his own essence, his very being'".¹⁵

In this case salvation would involve a creative and transforming power within an evolutionary process. It "confronts the ever-new situations of... time and the existential questions of men."¹⁶ The 'pressure of material urges'¹⁷ and a dynamic human nature seem to be the only operative factors for salvation. There are no transcendental structures to be discovered in salvation. However, this quest for salvation is characterised mainly by a "struggle for emancipation from self-alienation, a struggle in which the concern for-the-other and self-sacrifice are vital ingredients".¹⁸

The same commitment is also shared by Socialist Humanism in India. This orientation shows a deep secular concern which does not necessarily exclude transcendental aspects in its view of reality. The object of salvation is also future-oriented in its goal, namely an 'egalitarian society'.

"The Indian Socialists, like the Indian Liberals, have a framework of meaning and reality, in which they see the emergence of human freedom and its responsible fulfilment in a community of free persons as the goal of cosmic and historical evolution... the future of mankind as the fulfilment of personal destiny of every man."¹⁹

This is to be achieved by regaining knowledge, realizing truth and beauty. It is a difficult way. "Whether that journey has an ultimate purpose or not, we do not know", says Jawaharlal

15. Thomas, *Ideologies*, p. 115 (cf. K. Damodaran, in: *Man and Society in Indian Philosophy*, New Delhi, 1970, p. 55).

16. Rutti, L., The Christian World Mission in Confrontation with Communism, in: Hoffmann, G., Wille, W. (eds.), *The Christian World Mission*, Edinburgh, 1970, 37-57, p. 54 (Quoted henceforth: Rutti, *World*).

17. Roy - cf. Adhikari, Vol. II, pp. 218 (Quoted by Thomas, *Ideologies*, p. 104).

18. Precis to Mansani, *Ground*, p. 472.

19. Thomas, *Ideologies*, p. 51.

Nehru.²⁰ Peace and salvation seem to be realizable – to man's satisfaction – within the visible structures of reality. However, Indian Socialists "acknowledge the significance of transcendent moral and spiritual values for secular socialist humanism".²¹ "Only when materialism is transcended does individual man come into his own and become an end in himself", says Jayaprakash Narayan.²² And with reference to Ashoka Metha, M. M. Thomas says "man's relation to eternal ends is the basis of man's transcendence over society and time".²³ Subsequently, according to A. Metha, 'harmony within oneself, with one's fellowmen and between man and nature are achieved'.²⁴ Rammanohar Lohia considers that "the Hindu faith of emotive oneness of all life and things is also the political necessity of the Indian state"²⁵ and regrets that "alongside of this faith in metaphysical equality goes the most heinous conduct of social inequality."²⁶ This reveals a 'split personality'. Salvation, therefore, has to cope with the overcoming of this state of affairs through an immediate, secular commitment without ignoring a transcendental ethical basis. Thomas points out well the blend of a worldly concern and of a transcendental reminiscence, when he says,

"No doubt, Indian Socialists, all of them, start with the secularised spirituality of the West, whether Liberal or Marxists, which emphasizes the ultimacy and meaningfulness of history and historical progress through the dynamism of conflicts, but where the inherent optimism of this faith gets shattered, they

20. Norman, D., *Nehru, the First Sixty Years*, pp. 151-154 (Quoted by Thomas, *Ideologies* p. 55).

21. Thomas, *Ideologies*, p. 59.

22. Bimla Prasad, *Jayaprakash Narayan: Socialism, Sarvodaya and Democracy*, London, 1964 (Quoted by Thomas, *Ideologies*, p. 56).

23. Thomas, *Ideologies*, p. 59 (cf. Metha, A., *Democratic Socialism*, Bombay, (1963, p. 7).

24. Metha, A., *Democratic Socialism*, Bombay, 1963, p. 140, (Quoted by Thomas, *Ideologies*, p. 67).

25. Lohia R. M., *Fragments of a World Mind*, p. 148 (Quoted by Thomas, *Ideologies*, p. 69).

26. Lohia, R. M., Note and Comments, Vol. I, Hyderabad, 1972, p. 121 (Quoted by Thomas, *Ideologies*, p. 70).

tend to move into the a-historical spirituality characteristic of India.”²⁷

One might say that salvation in this view is not necessarily restricted to empirically verifiable data nor is it limited by time and nature. What Rütti points out with regard to Communism applies also to the above mentioned socialist concern:

“Man will shape the world and take his destiny into his own hands. This man has less and less need to bring human values and undertakings into expressly religious context, whether directly or institutionally.”²⁸

This view has to be taken seriously. It means respecting the multidimensionality of salvation. There is no reason to manipulate the actual situation by favouring or keeping a religious monopoly in man’s quest for salvation.

The secular concern is by no means missing in religious groups that emphasize a transcendental concern. K. Klostermaier exposes well the realistic view held by Hindus and Christians.

“They confront man with the hard and stern facts of life and death – they do not try to dispute evil and suffering away, they do not make it easy for man. But on the other hand they also hold out a persistent hope that the human situation is not to be despained of – there is something in man at work towards freedom and bliss, something which gives man strength and power to overcome...”²⁹

Within these religious traditions of Hinduism and Christianity one sometimes gets the impression that a transcendental concern dominates over the secular one. Given the richness of the various traditions salvation propounded in a theistic and sacramental way often finds its correction in non-theistic schools.

27. Thomas, *Ideologies*, p. 83.

28. Rütti, *World*, p. 54.

29. Klostermaier, *Liberation*, pp. 22-23.

"But ultimately both views are complementary and have to be taken together – the theistic way is in danger of becoming magic, the non-theistic way may end in agnosticism and a very limited immanentistic type of humanism."³⁰

It is a fact that one is faced with a difficult problem when Hindu and Christian traditions speaking of the Absolute go on to proclaim God in concepts of transcendence and immanence. This is of consequence because such a proclamation has its impact on the understanding of salvation.

"When we speak of God-transcendent we think immediately of God who, *from on high*, summons, commands and directs. We then set such a God over against God-immanent who is *within us* and transforms us by incorporating us into himself."³¹

R. Panikkar's statement taken out of its context seems to oversimplify the problem. Yet it illustrates well the average theological thinking which forms the basis for so many talks and sermons on the role of religion in life. To speak of God in a way that brings in "the data of philosophy and/or religion to quantitative parameters" or to employ a "geometrical or topological model"³² in reference to God is always to speak meaningfully. Yet does this distinctive characteristic of God 'on high' say that 'transcendent' is one of the meanings within the multidimensionality or polyvalence of the word 'high'? It certainly does not point to any specific ontological category, but to emphasize that 'God can only be seen from below', i. e. from where we are – though it conveys meaning – is to be again limited by the same categorical thinking that views only a transhuman

30. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

31. Panikkar, R., *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man*. London, 1973, pp. 29–30. cf. also: Forms of Spirituality pp. 9–40. (Quoted henceforth: Panikkar, *Trinity*).

32. Panikkar, R., Hermeneutics of Comparative Religion: Paradigma and Models, in: *Journal of Dharma*, 5 (1980) 38–51, pp. 41–47.

God above man. However, this does not add any validity to our response. To refer to God as totally different - 'the other', over and above man - has its meaning. Yet this view loses its relevance when the same God is thought of as being 'within us' at the same time.

The understanding of transcendence in salvation ceases to be authentic if it does not maintain at the same time that "immanence is not a negative transcendence but a true and irreducible immanence".³³ As long as God - transcendent and God - immanent are viewed separately, how can one know God without alienation and estrangement, as it is apparent in the holy scriptures and in the experience of the saints and sages? The '*neti-neti*' as expressed in Indian tradition and in negative theology seems to be a satisfactory answer to this problem. Yet it runs the risk of being nothing else than a negative horizon against which God appears distinctly. It may be said "absolute transcendence... is by very definition beyond all negation as well as beyond all affirmation".³⁴ Does this not amount to saying that any description, even when denied in the final analysis, does not present the objection the way it actually is? Nonetheless, one may speak of God's presence, in so far as he plays a role in the process or goal of salvation.

Looking at the Indian scene one can hardly overemphasize to-day's worldly and transcendental concern, if salvation reaches "man at that point where the centre of gravity of his existence lies".³⁵ Salvation touches the very core of life in a situation which is progressively seen as secular - in which man shapes his own life. Secularism, however, is not necessarily to be viewed as being in contradiction to a religious quest characterised by the insight that the world is shaped by God and man together. At the same time salvation is not to be circumscribed by purely secular goals.

To be hermeneutically aware in India, implies that one is alive to the whole Indian situation. Only when the transcen-

33. Panikkar, *Trinity*, p. 31.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

35. Rütti, *World* p. 55.

ental and the worldly concerns do not exclude each other can salvation be understood in the proper hermeneutical perspective. However, the tension between the 'known' and the 'not-yet-known' with regard to salvation co-exists with the alienation of man from what really is. Along with this human predicament (of alienation and bondage) goes the permanent challenge of understanding salvation.

A Permanent challenge to theology

To maintain strictly the distinction between the visible and the invisible dimension of reality, inculcates the power of discrimination between true insights and erroneous concepts one may find in the worldly and the transcendental understanding of salvation. Whatever is invisible, (and God is no exception) is simply, reality that is *not* visible – either partially or fully. God – like any visible or invisible reality – is really and not ideally present in and through *sabda* / language.³⁶ Salvation which is spoken of in relation with this presence (God) does not become unreal, even though it cannot be grasped fully in description because of its very relationship with the invisible. Nonetheless, God and his salvation can be understood and attained only through that which is indicated and manifested in and through language and reality. Moreover one may venture to say that an understanding of *satyam* (truth)³⁷ involves an understanding of God.

It is in this context that reference may be made to the cognition of God in the letters of Paul. Schlier comments upon Rom 1 : 19-25:

"The cognition of God is directed to the God who gives himself to be known in his cognizable truth. It relies upon his self-revelation, which happens in

36. Cf. the *autpattika* - relationship between *sabda* and *artha* on pp. 2-3.

37. *satyam* (truth) emerges when that which is present to the word is identical with its object. cf. above p. 3.

the creation in such a way that it identifies itself (*ausweist*) within that which is created".³⁸

Paul indicates this revealing presence of God when he speaks of the glory and radiance (*doxa*) of God. And it is precisely this radiance - in which God reveals himself - that rests upon the creation so that creation as such points to him. Paul speaks here in the tradition of the Psalmist. Psalm 18, 2ff says:

"The heavens declare the glory (LXX: *doxan*) of God, the vault of heaven proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech (LXX: *rēma*), night to night declares knowledge (LXX: *Gnōsin*). There is no speech, nor are there words (LXX: *lalai oude logoi*), their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world" (LXX: *ta rēmata*).

In the words of Schlier, "The glory of God heralds creation and in this way God is known as Creator, through a word that is not a word".³⁹

All that has been said above taken together with other insights of Paul lead Schlier to conclude that the cognition of God means the self-involvement of the creature in the call of a self-revealing God. It is a call which is inherent in creation itself. In other words, God's glory speaks to man through creation and man's authentic response to this call is cognition of God.⁴⁰

Such a view maintains that God is invisible. Yet there is still cognition of God through visible reality according to Christian tradition. Here we may recall the above expose of hermeneutical awareness that is based upon the co-existence of reality and language. Therefore, it does not seem to go against

38. Schlier, H., Die Erkenntnis Gottes nach den Briefen des Apostel-Paulus, in: *Gott in Welt*, Festgabe für Karl Rahner, Bd. I., ed. by Metz, Kern, Darlapp, Vorgrimmler, Freiburg i. Br., 1964, 515-523, p. 516.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 517. Cf. also Ps 8; 2; 103; 31; si 42, 16; Rm 3, 23; L Co 11, 7.

40. *Ibid.*, cf., p. 519.

Pauline tradition, to say that God is to be known in *satyam* (truth) - *satyam* which becomes present in the word (language) that is in authentic relation to the object (reality). One sees God in all and not as all. God, minus the world, is still God. The crucial point lies in the human response which may be always full of meaning, but which ceases to be valid if that which really is, is manipulated. When man knows what really is, man knows God.

It is this invisible God who can be known as the God of salvation. There is no way of adequately describing him in spite of his involvement in the human and cosmic situation through the various *avatas* or through the incarnation of Jesus Christ. But this inability to describe God does not annihilate his real presence. The effects of salvation - though they may have their source in God and man together - can become manifest through human involvement, and in the degree to which this involvement can be perceived, the effects of salvation are describable.

Therefore, when salvation is intrinsically related to Jesus Christ, it does not mean that God's invisibility acquires a visibility in Jesus Christ - apart from what God is.

Paul says in 2 Co 4: 6:

"For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."

This insight is important as the basic issue of salvation within Christianity is and remains the truth about God, as it is to be understood from the Bible. It is imperative for our understanding of salvation to know Jesus Christ as the source of our knowledge of the truth about God.

"As far as theological statements individually go, all the attributes given to God in Christian tradition may be found somewhere else too, but the total phenomenon of the 'presence' is uniquely and distinctly that mirrored in the 'image'. Forgetting about interpretations and systems of theology related to

particular philosophies, we become aware of the 'way-character' of Jesus Christ, of his function as the 'mediator' of not only a verbalized truth about God, but as 'master' of life and guide to the source of truth, as the source of truth himself, the one who leads men into an existential participation in the truth of God..."⁴¹

Klostermaier's brilliant exposé of a Christian view of the significance of Jesus Christ, emphasizes the source of knowledge of God and salvation. God in his *doxa* as witnessed to by Paul and also God in *satyam* as known through language, is the same God who shines forth uniquely in Jesus Christ. The understanding of God and salvation through Jesus Christ can only be reached by listening to what is said by *sabda* contained in the Bible and by responding authentically. This can only be done when man is hermeneutically aware of what is hoped for in salvation.

In hermeneutical awareness one cannot speak properly of salvation without taking into account the relevance of its multi-dimensionality in present-day situations. This can only be achieved if one sees salvation – in regard to both, transcendental and worldly concerns – as it is inherent not only in the salvific texts but also in to-day's situation. Understanding arising out of hermeneutical awareness does not stop only on the level of head and heart, but finds its completion on the level of commitment and action.

To understand salvation, therefore, means always that the whole man is formed by this understanding. There is no understanding – not even a theological one – of salvation, without a committed response to what really is, in any new situation that arises. This remains a permanent theological challenge.

Othmar Gächter

41. Klostermaier, K., Hindu - Christian Dialogue: Its Religious and Cultural Implications, in: *Sciences Religieuse / Studies in Religion*, 12 (1971) 83-97, p. 87.

The Sociological Dimension of Buddhism

If we decide to enquire about the sociological dimension of Buddhism a number of questions present themselves. In this paper, I shall concentrate on those I consider as the chief ones. Is the teaching of the Buddha conditioned to some extent by the features of the sixth century B. C. society in which he began his life? Does this teaching offer elements which are bound to be influential on public morality and political life? Is king Ashoka's *dharma* with the state reorganization it commanded a genuine transcription of those elements in terms of governmental policies? Has it later parallels elsewhere? Does the Buddhist 'sense of adaptation' explain much of the cultural and religious variation of Buddhism in the course of its long and widespread development?

1. The sociological conditioning of the Buddha's teaching

The area of the Buddha's activity was the 'middle country' (*madhyadesa*), i. e., the Gangetic plain from just west of the modern city of Lucknow to Bhāgalpur in the east. From about 900 to 600 B. C., aryanization had made great advances in this region. The beginning of this process corresponds roughly with the implantation of iron metallurgy in India. The Gangetic valley which had naturally been deeply afforested had yielded steadily to ruthless deforesting by numerous groups of Aryan settlers. These were in consequence abandoning their previous pastoral, herd-keeping mode of life and adopting agriculture instead. The land was enormously fertile and irrigation easy. While the number of cattle declined, the area devoted to rice and vegetables growing increased and the people's diet changed from milk products and meat to chiefly rice and vegetables.

With the food supply better assured, the density of the population increased steadily. And with the production of surplus stocks of grain, the beginnings of urban life occurred around centres of marketing which situated themselves at the crossings of land routes or in fluvial harbours. A population of traders

and artisans grew there, distinct from the farmers in their hamlets and small villages. The artisans—wood-workers, iron-workers leather-workers, masons, painters, ivory-workers, goldsmiths, silversmiths, etc.—achieved a remarkable organization into autonomous guilds capable of exercising control over their members and avoiding undue competition; the nascent state had eventually to recognize them. Since trade and industry drew in the wealth of the country, there developed also what Atindranath Bose calls ‘parasite professions like stage-acting, dancing, singing, buffoonery, gambling, tavern-keeping and prostitution’. And because many of the towns soon became seats of political power, there were also plenty of officials and princes together with Brahmans and other religious specialists. Indeed, many of these towns had become capital cities of kingdoms or republics, most of which, however, were to be absorbed by two giants, the kingdoms of Kosala and Magadha.

By the time of the Buddha, the main cities were: Sravasti, the leading trade centre and capital of Kosala on the Rāvati river; Rājagṛaha, the capital of the ascending Magadha kingdom, comprising the old stronghold built on five low hills and the new city built by king Bimbisara, an elder contemporary of the Buddha the ex-royal capitals, Saketa, Kausambi Campa, and Kasi (Varanasi) which was already a major centre of learning; then, the ex-capitals of republics, Vaisali, Kapilavastu, the birthplace of the Buddha, and Kusinara of the Mallas where he was to die.

There had, indeed, been or still were republics north of the Ganga, namely, of the Sakyas where he was born, of the Koliyas, of the Moryas, and of the Mallas who were loosely confederated with the Vajjis, the Licchavis, the Videhas and the Nāyās. These republics are important because they represent a form of government intermediary between the older tribal democratic assemblies, where every adult shared in the discussions, and the later autocracy of the monarchical state. Indeed, they governed by discussion but within an aristocratic assembly of elders or noblemen (*kṣatriyas*), the *sangha*. This or perhaps even the tribal *sangha* appears to have served as model for the Buddhist *sangha*. All these republics collapsed within a few years of the Buddha's decease, i. e., by about 450 B. C. This was due certainly to the onslaught of the two great monarchies but

probably also to internal disagreements arising from *undisciplined individualism*.

The monarchies too offered suitable conditions for the growth of unbridled individualism, at least in the king and the ambitious princes too often ready for palace intrigues and *coups d'état*. The king was supposed to be, owing to his sacramental enthronement, a human impersonation of righteousness (*dharma*) and thus the protector of all his subjects and the impartial administrator of justice; but too easily pride, self-indulgence and ambition would drive him to unrighteous conduct and to wars of conquest with devastating consequences.

More generally, individualism, which could not blossom freely within the corporate life of the tribe, its land collectivism and its barter system of exchange, found an excellent medium for growth in the new urban life. In the cities, tribal or village morality broke down; private property and a capitalism of bankers developed; division of labour and occupational specialization initiated a stratification of subcastes and opened the way to selfish casteism; the availability of wealth permitted excesses of luxury, festive living, gambling, sports, prostitution and idleness but it also favoured cultural sophistication and rationality.

It is against this background of the sophisticated society of the affluent cities that there arose a movement of dissent that can safely be compared to the apparition of hippies in the urbanized and affluent societies of today's West. This is the proliferation from around 700 B. C. of homeless, non-conformist wanderers, called *sramanas* or *parivrājakas*, i. e., men who had 'gone forth' away from householding. Opting out of the social and economic life of the cities and of the responsibility of family life, they just wanted a carefree existence unloaded with the duties and rights of urban citizens and unhampered by their moral, religious or even polite conventions but supported parasitically by the alms they requested from those very citizens whose life they despised. Many of them who later formed a kind of sect were called *ājīvakas* (or *ājīvikas*), probably from *ājiva* in the sense of a special way of life which was the opposite of any normal avocation. Rejecting caste and kinship and the householder's status, they roamed the land unclad or clad with rags

or queer clothing except during the rainy season when they congregated in various temporary retreats.

When Siddhārtha of the Gotama clan "went forth" from his princely home and family in Kapilavastu and became Sākyamuni, the monk from the sākyan republic, he joined in effect the sramanic movement and for some time sought his own way in the company of some ascetic and somewhat yogic *sramanas*. But their yoga was too undeveloped and their extreme asceticism almost cost him his life. Yet he did not turn towards the sensualism and moral laxism of the materialist *sramanas*, the *lokayatas*, but he tried to find a middle way between the two extremes.

In tune with the individualism of his contemporaries and especially of his fellow-*sramanas*, he went on his personal quest with the relentless energy which is so characteristic of his temperament and which he would demand of his disciples. He was, indeed, above all a man of will, intensely interested in discovering the ultimate goal of existence and mustering all his strength in that sole pursuit. Were not traders and kings pursuing often no less relentlessly much less worthy goals? The steely quality of his will explains why he could not share the position of the sceptical or dogmatic *akarmavādins*. He could not doubt the innovating power of human decision or deny the efficacy of action in the making or unmaking of man's destiny. Rather than to the being of man he was drawn to pay attention to his becoming. He saw him as a bundle of dynamisms, not only of dynamic tendencies but of dynamic dispositions to act in this or that way and become attached to perishable goals as if they could satisfy him for ever. Like the drunkards of the cities, all men were intoxicated, not however by drinks, but by all kinds of thirsts (*trṣṇā*) for objects in which they saw the solidity of being whereas, in fact, these objects escaped from their grasp with the fluidity of water passing through the fingers of the hand or the volatility of flames consuming the most solid fuels. All beings were fuel for the fire; the whole world was afire; and man himself was burning with an idiotic thirst for such impermanent objects or persons, such impermanent existence or even non-existence. He saw this most vividly in his affluent society, in the men and women of his generation greedy for wealth and pleasures, quarrelsome and violent. And he saw the result of this insatiable

avidity: a general dissatisfaction, a pursuit of distractions, a restlessness, a competition of selfishnesses, a proliferation of lies and slanders, of thefts, violence and murders, and a general malaise and misery of frustration.

Yes, the indulgence of *trṣṇā* could only end in the suffering of frustration, in what he called *duhkha*, because nothing could ever be a permanent possession. The more he realized the impermanency of all realities, the better he diagnosed the fallaciousness of desire and the inevitability of suffering. *Sarvam duhkham*, he said, everything is frustrating, because *sarvam anityam*, because all things are impermanent. And finally, on his night of illumination, he thought he saw the reason for that universal impermanence: *sarvam anityam* because *sarvam anātman*: all things are passing because all are void of *ātman*. The soul, *jīva* or *ātman*, which his insight denied was not the *ātman* of the esoteric thinkers of the Upanishads (with which there is no proof that he was ever acquainted) but that asserted by the nirgranthas and Jainas, the spiritual independent living substance encompassed by any bit of matter. Whereas for Jina even flames concealed a soul, for the newly enlightened Buddha all allegedly animated beings were only dynamic fluxes like flames. Man was a five-streamed dynamic flux of five types of associated mini-events (the five *skandhas*) unsupported by any inner permanent entity.

Such a view cut at the root the belief in self which is a necessary condition of *trṣṇā*, itself the source of *duhkha*, and it laid the basis of a therapeutic of cooling, the successful end of which would be *nirvāṇa*, the extinction of the suffering of frustration. This therapeutic process would begin with the practice of a new morality accessible to lay men and women, then mendicant renouncers (*bhikṣus* and *bhikṣunis*) would be asked to devote all their time to meditation (*dhyāna*) and wisdom (*prajnā*).

It is mainly in the formulation of his new morality (*sila*) that the Buddha manifests his awareness of the features of his urban society and takes a decisive step to reorient it. The first social evil their ethical code means to eliminate is violence (*ahimsā*). The society in which the Buddha lived knew no special respect for life. By laying down *ahimsā* as their first precept,

the Buddha moulded the Indians into a new type of humanity for which respect for all life is the central value.

The next precept is directed against lie; truthfulness the norm in simple tribal life.

In his third precept, against undue appropriation, the Buddha also takes account of a feature of urban as opposed to tribal society, the sense of private property and the consequent avidity to increase it by all possible means, licit or illicit. To his *bhikṣus* he will say: renounce all private possession and accept only what is given to you and strictly according to your absolute needs for food and clothing. To the laity, he says: renounce all thieving, all shady business, all dishonesty.

His fourth precept commands complete chastity to his monks and nuns and, to the lay people, avoidance of all sex outside marriage.

His fifth precept in its primitive version prescribes to avoid all wickedness. This, though pertinent, seems somewhat vague. About a century after his death, it got changed into a prohibition of intoxicating drinks. Recently, the Buddhists of Sri Lanka have extended it to intoxicating drugs.

Joined with these five prohibitions are the positive recommendations of *dāna*, alms-giving, *maitreya*, rejoicing in the joys of others, and *karunā* compassion for their sufferings. They counteract selfish individualism and nurture social sense and generosity.

People ready to follow this new morality were invited to join the new community which the Buddha called *sangha*, a name evocative of the aristocratic republican assemblies. Like them, it was principally made up of elite members, the mendicant-renouncers (*bhikṣus*), and was ordered to the promotion of their kind of life, but it was also turned towards the Buddhist welfare of the laity. Not being geared to the pursuit of any secular goal, it needed no personal head and no authoritarian chain of command and responsibility. In its procedure for decision making, it gave equal participation to every single member and avoided the formation of opposite parties by requesting

general consensus for carrying a decision. Due to the spread of Buddhism over a vast area, it had to be made of many local *sanghas* and the main effort was to maintain the unity of view and conduct within each of them. Any dissenters should remove themselves and form a *sangha* of their own. This 'law of schism' was the cost the Buddhists accepted to preserve the inner concord of each *sangha* and, secondarily, the right of minority views to be entertained.

In the *Sigala-vāda Sutta* (*Digha Nikāya*, III, 180–193) the duties of the members of the *Sangha* towards the householder are set out. They are to show their affection for him by restraining him from evil courses of action, by exhorting him to do what is honourable, by entertaining kindly feelings towards him, by imparting knowledge to him, by dealing with his difficulties and doubts, and by revealing to him the way to heaven. In return, he should love them, welcome them and provide for their material needs. All this indicates a rather close intercourse between them; indeed, the *āramas* of the *bhiksus* were generally situated quite near to the agglomerations, whether villages or towns, contrary to the usage of brahmanic ascetics. For the *Sangha* was meant to act as a ferment for the betterment of society.

The Buddha himself was not only moving for 40 years among all the ranks of society but was in frequent touch with the two important kings of his day, Pasenadi, the king of Kosāla, and Bimbisāra, the king of Māgadha, who had even become his disciple (*upāsaka*). In the course of a discussion about kings' power, a *bhikṣu* asked him, 'But who, lord, is the King of the Kings?' He replied. 'It is *Dharma*, O *bhikṣu*!' He meant, of course, not the brahmanical but the ethical *dharma* which he preached and whose righteousness he wished to see applied totally to the various branches of state administration, especially that concerned with the economic welfare of the people.

2. The social adaptability of Buddhism

It would seem that the paradoxicality of doctrinal Buddhism should have prevented it from becoming a popular movement. Its doctrine of soullessness (*nairātmyavāda*), its neg-ontology (rejecting all staticity of being in favour of a pure dynamism of becoming) the obscure negativity of its notion of

nirvāna, its atheism, the elitism of its monastic system and the austere demands of its ideal pattern of life: an existence exclusively devoted to *dhyāna* in complete poverty and chastity, all these plus its opposition to sacrificial Brahmanism hardly fitted it for popular appeal. But counterbalancing them there were other elements and aspects which sensibilized the masses in its favour: the attractiveness of the human personality of its founder, the sanity of the morality he prescribed, the apparently wise rationality of his expositions and their constant reliance on homely examples, his appeal to self-reflection rather than authority, his presentation of *nirvana* as a final deliverance to be hoped for by all irrespective of their present status but not excluding access to various heavens on the way towards it, his offering himself as a therapeute with a sure remedy against the frustration of existence rather than as an inspired prophet or a philosopher of genius. and, finally, his marvellous sense of adaptation.

This adaptability of Buddhism is manifest in many respects. To become *upāsaka*, a layman had to 'take his refuge' in the *dharma* (in post-Buddha times also in the *Buddha* and the *Sangha*) and to commit himself to the basic five precepts but if he was so disposed that he could commit himself only to four, or three, or two, or one, he could still be accepted provided he was ready at least to abstain from killing. The rest he would adopt gradually. Similarly, the laity were expected to practise only the basic dharma of morality but they could also try the *bhiksu's* life one or several times in a month. No renunciation of caste was demanded of them but the caste system was considered irrelevant to salvation. No attachment to the body should be cultivated but the reliques of the Buddha could be venerated by the laity and stupas built for them by the kings and wealthy which became centres of popular pilgrimages favouring the growth of a proto *bhakti* kind of religious buddhism. Buddha and the Buddhist preachers adapted themselves to the diversity of languages by using the vernacular of each region. This practice is reflected in the Edicts of Asoka. To inculcate the greatness of their founder, Buddhists ransacked the folklore of Indian tales and interpreted the hero of each tale, whether animal, human or god, as Siddhartha in a previous life overcoming a difficult situation through his cleverness (*kausalya*) or sometimes a great display of compassion (*karuna*). Thus grew the collection

of his *Jātakas* (Former Lives) which helped much to turn the people to belief in rebirth. It also paved the way for the gradual docetization of the Buddha and his being raised to a kind of godly and then supergodly status, this transmutation itself being an adaptation to the religious preferences of the masses. As to the belief in gods, it was not rejected but the gods were said to be suprahuman beings as much in need of salvation as men but more remote from it because less capable of realizing their *dukhha* owing to the very exaltedness of their status.

Conclusion

What helps towards understanding salvation in the Indian context can we derive from all this notwithstanding the enormous differences between Buddhism and Christianity and the fact that Buddhism as such is today practically absent from India? Let me in conclusion mention the most obvious ones.

- 1) The history of Buddhism suggests that however transmundane the hope for a final salvation howsoever understood appeals deeply to man and that like the Buddhists we should not cease to proclaim our eschatology and "the hope which is within us".
- 2) It suggests that a soundly humane morality centred on unselfishness, generosity and loving compassion, focusing first on the intra-family relationships, then on servants, friends, teachers and saintly guides, and further on the poor and the wretched, and extending gradually to all, independent of castes and other distinctions, is the mainspring of a large beneficial influence of a religion upon society.
- 3) It shows the educative power of Buddhism and the capacity of such an education to literally transmute humanity. And it warns us not to neglect this basic task of transforming man through education in our pursuit of aims perhaps more striking but unachievable by men who are not first sufficiently transformed into the Christian image.

- 4) Thus, for instance, it points that if we wish to free man from manifold exploitation we must strike at its root by changing the heart of his exploiters.

5) It shows the advantage there is for a religious movement if it can depend on an elite of adherents, a *Sangha* or a clergy, but also its vulnerability when it depends on it too exclusively.

6) Buddhism also points to compassion (*karuna*) as the motivation for a relentless missionary action at all levels of society and wherever the seed of the word (cf. the Buddhist parable of the seed) finds an opportunity to take roots. King Asoka, who organized missionary expeditions to other countries, warns us to avoid the competitive approach and to stick to humility and tolerance in our relations with people of other persuasion.

7) The adaptability of Buddhism derives, it seems, from its nature as a therapeutic. In Christianity, adaptation, inculturation, contextualization, etc. derive from the 'principle of incarnation'. But in the field of practice they often coincide and the realizations of the first can be lessons for the second.

8) Buddhism is a therapeutic somehow anticipatively in the manner of psycho-analysis. Concerning the latter, a Lacan in Paris has made an important point by divorcing his conception of the nature of the analytic process from a standard conception according to which it is above all a process of cure, in order to present it as essentially a process of discovery of "the truth of the subject" to which a notion of cure is more or less irrelevant. Buddhism was able to keep the balance between its two aspects as 'cure' and 'discovery of the truth of man'. This, it seems, would indicate an ideal for the relation between the critical and practical Christian theology.

Richard DeSmet

Salvation and the Missionary Context of India

Christians in India cannot discuss the problem of salvation without taking into account the fact that a vast majority of the Indian people does not share their faith but follow other religions like Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism. So the question is not only how our fellow countrymen approach the question of their salvation, but also and principally what Christianity can contribute to their religious experience. The Christian community was missionary in outlook from the very beginning, and the sending of his disciples by Christ to proclaim the Gospel to all nations set the Church in sharp opposition to Judaism, which was very much geographically restricted and particularist in its approach to the divine economy of salvation. With the conversion of the Roman empire to Christian faith and the establishment of Christendom, the Christian church also became pre-occupied more with its own internal organization, and since there were only very few non-Christians left in Europe, evangelization lost all practical significance to the Western Church. The so called missionary explosion of the 16th to the 18th centuries was mostly a sideshow of the colonial adventures of Western nations and did not involve much theological reflection on the service of the Church to the salvation of peoples. Only towards the end of the colonial era did Western theologians start discussing the meaning and purpose of the missionary effort.

Theology of the missions

Friedrich D. Schleiermacher who was one of the first to speak of a science of missions viewed missions as a responsibility of Western culture with its religious consciousness to penetrate the non-Western cultural areas. Many followed an ecclesiocentric missiology. As the German Lutheran theologian Gustav Warneck pointed out, only the Christian religion has a church, "the institute of healing for all humanity", and world

mission is her inherent task and the lifeline of her existence.¹ According to Manfred Linz, "Mission is God engaging the Church as a partner in his work in the world".² Though Vatican II has a special document on the missions distinct from that on the Church, its missiology is mainly ecclesiocentric: "The specific purpose of the missionary activity is evangelization and the planting of the church among those peoples and groups where she has not yet taken root."³ But even the Church has its origin in the Trinitarian missions of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and so missionary activity is nothing else and nothing less than the manifestation or epiphany of God's will.⁴

Missions in crisis

The Christian missions are, undoubtedly, undergoing today a deep crisis, not actually by external restrictions or persecutions, but from within. The great majority of conversions to Christianity in the past came from the culturally primitive peoples. But with their political awakening and realization of their racial and traditional identity and their political power exercised through the ballot box, they find conversion to Christianity culturally and politically suicidal. Hence today conversions have almost completely stopped. Missionaries are spending most of their time in the so called indirect mission work, that means mostly in social, educational and other philanthropic activities. The agencies and organizations for the propagation of faith founded in Europe and America for supporting the missionaries working abroad have lost their incentive and interest with the return home of those missionaries, and they have become mere fund-raising concerns. Bishops in the so called mission countries left with the institutional legacy of departing Western missionaries find themselves in the difficult task of maintaining those institutions and for that purpose spend a considerable time in foreign countries raising funds.

1. See J. Verkuyl: *Contemporary Missiology, an Introduction*, trs. Dale Cooper, (Grand Rapids, Mich. : W. B. Eerdmans, 1978), pp. 26-28.

2. *Ibid.* pp. 32-34.

3. *Ad Gentes* § 6.

4. *Ibid* § 9.

Missions in the past were extensions of the organizational aspect of the Church and understood mainly as the expansion and increase of the groups visibly integrated into the institutional forms of the existing church. The main focus, therefore, of Church activity was on administration, and missionary work was ancillary to it, intended simply to bolster the expansion of the organism and to strengthen it. It operates with primary emphasis on those who are inside the Church, with an eye on consolidation and expansion of what is already in existence. It looks for visible results especially in quantitative terms and strives to integrate people into homogeneous moulds and to create uniformity.⁵

But this traditional approach to the mission has been suddenly jolted by reality. People are realizing that the Christian West which pretended to extend itself into the Third World through missionary activity is no longer Christian. For the last two hundred years people have been leaving the church and only a few culturally primitive people were moving in. Hence the Western Church cannot now take for granted those who are supposedly inside, and is forced, therefore, to evangelize its own people. The Roman Synod of Bishops of 1974 showed the radical diversity of the missionary situation today: While the Bishops from Western Europe and North America thought of Mission in traditional terms, those from Latin America placed the focus of evangelization in the struggle against economic, social, cultural and political domination and oppression. Bishops from the communist countries had their struggle against atheistic communism uppermost in their minds as their missionary task, and those from Asia and Africa gave priority to the encounter with non-Christian religions as the proper missionary focus. The participants of the Synod could not agree on a common missionary statement.

Mission theology could not be the same again. Focus shifted from those inside to those outside. Christ himself addressed the outsiders, those lost from the house of Israel. Denouncing

5. Jose Comblin. *The Meaning of Mission, Jesus, Christians and the Wayfaring Church.* trs. John Drury. (Maryknoll, N. Y. : Orbis Bks, 1978), pp. 9-18.

sins and announcing the Gospel of the Kingdom he sought to provoke a transformation in people's lives. For him the principal objects of the mission were the lost sheep, publicans, sinners, prostitutes, lowly Galileans.

Salvation, the missionary focus

Christ sent his disciples out into the whole world to announce the Good News of Salvation to every creature. So, we can say, the misunderstanding of salvation was the main cause of the failure of missionary work in the past; on the other hand, the proper meaning and scope of Gospel mission constitute the main focus of theological problems today.

It is enough to recall the soteriological theories that were current among theologians a few years ago to understand the mechanical working of our missions and all the tricks and techniques used by missionaries to gain conversions. Theology of salvation was loaded with the overtones of magic, mythology and symbolism carried over from an age when man was too mystified by the universe and its happenings to realize consciously its mystery. Thus Christ's redemptive death was interpreted on the lines of an animal sacrifice in which the victim's death somewhat magically obtained benefits for the sacrificers. What achieved salvation for humanity was not Christ's death, which others inflicted on him, but rather his deliberate and conscious identification with humanity to the point of accepting the sad consequences of standing up for truth and human freedom. Similarly, salvation was also conceived in purely juridical terms of satisfying the demands of an impersonal order of justice, of placating an angry God through the substitution of his own Son in the place of his enemies. All such theories do not evidently agree with the simple message of the Gospel, according to which God so loved the world as to give his only begotten for its salvation.⁶

The Gospel a Church without walls

In dealing with the Christian mission we have to bear in mind a few basic facts about the Gospel; (1) The Gospels clearly show that Christ's primary aim was not to found a new

6. *Ibid* pp. 19-23.

religion in opposition to Judaism, a Church to counter the structures of the Hebrew tradition. In fact he insisted on fulfilling the Law and the prophets without omitting a single line or jot. He taught the worship of the one true God, who is a spirit, in spirit and truth, without being restricted to special geographical spots and territories. In the beginning Christianity was only a "way" within Judaism, a renewal group to put new life into the religion of the fathers. Only when the universalism of the Christian Gospel came into conflict with the Judaic exclusivism and particularism did the Christians emerge as a distinct religious group. Only when Europe became Christian did the Western Church become particularistic assuming to a great extent the static structures of the Roman political set up, and appear as one religion among many religions struggling for superiority among and domination over them. To insist, therefore, on planting the Church with all its institutional aspects as the primary task of the mission is clearly a distortion of the Gospel.

(2) Christ's Gospel did not focus on any esoteric doctrines either. As the missionary discourses of the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2, 14-36; 3, 12-26; 4, 8-12; 5, 29-32; 10, 34-43; 13, 26-41) clearly demonstrate, the Apostles do not announce any special doctrines, held secret so far. They appeal to the religious knowledge their audience already has, the faith of the Jews in the promises of Yahweh, and the knowledge concerning the Author of all creation and the source and mainstay of human life the gentiles already acknowledged. Christ comes as the fulfilment of the salvific promises of the Lord, the one who went about the length and breadth of Palestine doing good to the people and finally was installed as the Son and Saviour and Judge of all creation. According to the Gospels Christ rarely engages in any abstract statement of doctrine, but rather seeks to face and resolve the actual problems of the people. Among these the most important are: the apparent lack of meaning in the life of the people, absence of ultimate values, hypocrisy, vanity and pride in the leaders, widespread poverty, injustice and exploitation. These are problems faced by men at all times, and any religion worth its name has to face even today. In facing these problems Christ's doctrines about the Trinity of God, supernatural life etc. show their unique meaning and relevance: God is the Father who loves men so much as to send his own Son as their leader.

and saviour. The Son is the Word, the model and ideal of all creation and the Holy Spirit is the Gift of God that becomes the inner principle of the life of the people. In solving his human problems man should remember that his life is more than human, that it has a meaning beyond death, in the Father's house, where there are many mansions.

The Spiritual message and human problems

On account of the direct involvement of the Gospel with the actual problems of man, it will be a serious mistake to dissociate the spiritual message from the psychological, cultural, social and political situations in which man's immediate concerns are actually rooted. In fact, the evangelists present their spiritual message enfleshed in the best insights in these areas then available to them. Only later did the deep influence of Greek philosophy especially of Neo-Platonism divide doctrine and life, contemplation and action into two separate areas. For Plato reality was the ideas and the world of concrete existence was one of shadows. Plotinus had an emanationist view of the world of reality emerging from the absolute One through Intelligence, World Soul, and the human soul reaching down to material things. This introduced into Christian thought a vertical type of pneumatology that conceived the Spirit as descending from above and manifesting himself mostly in spiritual ideas and directive principles, and received principally by the leadership of the Church, the Magisterium and only secondarily and remotely by the rank and file. This was in sharp contrast to the Semitic and Oriental presentation of the Spirit in physical and biological terms as wind and breath and finally as the Inner Controller that animates and inspires every member of humanity and all aspects of human life from within. So the real message of salvation is that humanity in its struggle with its everyday problems has an ideal and goal far transcending the purely human limits, and that in this encounter with its problems it is aided by the Spirit of God working from within, and by Christ, the Word-made-flesh, who conquered sin and death and became the leader, model and guide for all men.

We cannot imagine the Gospel in Barthian fashion as the pure Word of God, the proclamation of the judgement of

God to which man cannot add anything. The Word of God is communicated to man in the human word, through the human situations charged with psychological, social, cultural and political overtones. The missionary must, therefore, first listen to that divine Word in the concrete human situation in order to be able to proclaim it faithfully and effectively. Obviously the saving mission of the Church cannot be detached or isolated from the concrete situation in which it is exercised.

“The People of God” and mission

Besides, the particular conception of the Church one works with greatly influences the nature of mission work. The mechanical concept of Mission work as simply planting the Church and extending the Kingdom of God comes from an impersonal ecclesiology, a conception of the church as a society with definite conditions for membership, an institution discernible by its particular notes and the like. Vatican II moved away from such impersonal ideas and shifted the emphasis to a personalistic understanding of the pilgrim People of God with its members relating themselves to Christ in differing degrees of intimacy. But this new vision of the Church has yet to find adequate expression in our missionary approaches. The people of God is not constituted exclusively of card carrying baptized Christians. The people of God in a particular place is all the people God loves there, and God loves all his children. So there is no single human being that does not, in some manner, at least remotely, belong to the People of God. The missionary people of God, therefore, is not entirely outside the people it evangelizes. Hence the people that carry the message of salvation has first to identify itself socially, culturally, and politically with the people it wants to evangelize. With a marginalised people the Church has to become marginalised in order to lead it to the fullness of its humanity and faith as it were from within. Missionary work is, therefore, a common search of both who evangelize and are being evangelized for the saving truth of God.

Mission and culture

It follows from what was said above that missionary work cannot be the introduction of a so called Christian culture into

a non-Christian world, as Schleiermacher had suggested. In fact, Christian mission is "the theological perception and interpretation of the spirituality of a particular culture in the light of the Biblical faith in God".⁷ taking into account the particular mentality and habitual mode of response of a people to the deepest religious values. Thus the Gothic cathedrals of Europe became the expressions of Christian faith because they symbolized the daring creativity of the Western mind and its defiance of all obstacles in the pursuit of the ultimate goal. But the same deepest sentiment found a different expression in the Asian world in a "spiritual yearning for harmony in the midst of agony and pain".⁸ So instead of simply transporting cultural expressions from one tradition to another, the primary task of Christian mission is to evangelize culture itself, as Paul VI states repeatedly in his *Evangelii Nuntiandi*.

The relation between the Church and the world is therefore, a crucial missionary question. The missionary approach will be vastly different according as one takes a purely static or a dynamic view of things. In the past the static view has often dominated, taking the church and the world as two parallel and complete totalities in coexistence, contact and collaboration, solidarity, dialogue and service. The Church was supposed to carry out her mission in a really distinct and self-contained world. But this is a view of the church that developed in the late Middle Ages in emulation with the political authority and gained a certain fixity with Protestantism. But the mission of Jesus was a movement deeply involved in and identified with the concerns of the common people. It does not run parallel to the world, but in, with and for the world.

The uniqueness of Christ: Mission and the non-Christian Religions

Equally irrelevant is the sharp opposition maintained in the past between the missionary Church and the other World Religions. The Christian attitude towards this comparison has

7. Choan-Seng Song, *Christian Mission in Reconstruction. An Asian Analysis* (Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis, 1977), p. 28.

8. *Ibid* p. 26.

gone through different stages in the recent past according to the political vicissitudes of Europe, and the uniqueness of Christ and Christianity was defined accordingly. The earlier approach was to take Christianity as an ethical and religious system and to establish its superiority over other religious and doctrinal systems: Christianity was unique by the superiority of its doctrines, purity of its practices and the divine character of its founder, and so the non-Christian religions were expected to die by their own inner contradictions and eventually to give place to Christianity; one had first to die to those religions in order to become a follower of Christ. But the first world war which brought the Christian nations in conflict with each other proved a great embarrassment for the claim of Christian superiority. So the focus of uniqueness was shifted to the surpassing divine revelation in Jesus Christ, in the light of which all religions including Christianity were to be judged. All the different ideas about God found their fullness in the divine self-disclosure in Jesus Christ, the Son of God; all history culminates in Jesus. But the tragedy of World War II shattered Europe's faith in history and historical revelation and Christian missiology shifted its focus to Christology: Christianity is not doctrine, it is not historical revelation, but an existential encounter with Christ, the Word of God, the unique Son of God. No other religion claims such a religious founder. But with the post-war resurgence of Europe hope revived and faith in salvation history was reaffirmed. Subsequently Christianity's missionary encounter with other religions has found its focus in eschatology, the overarching plan of God for the salvation of man in history. Here the uniqueness of Christianity is not over against other religions, but rather against the background of the total plan of human salvation in which it has to play an unique role. In that respect the other religions too are unique since they also in their particular, historical, socio-cultural and political contexts play their special roles accord to the all embracing providence of God in guiding peoples to their ultimate destiny.

Vatican II in its document on the non-Christian religions readily admitted that other religions also provided men with answers to the basic problems of man and that they contained the seeds of the Word. Now no one indulges in the traditional comparisons of non-Christian religions to Christianity as error

v. truth, natural knowledge v. revealed truth, imperfect v. perfect and the like. Some even go to the extent of calling non-Christians anonymous Christians. Still, one has to admit that for the Western church the presence of non-Christians was always an anomaly and an embarrassment, since its missionary ideal was often one of conquest of the world for Christ.

But the missionary ideal chosen by Christ himself was that of the Word: The Word encounters men and enables them to encounter it in a personal way. This encounter cannot be forced upon them from the outside, but has to come from within by a sort of felt need. Here the example of the Hindu Guru who patiently waits for the disciple to attain by himself the psychological and spiritual maturity and to realize the nature of his true self through continuous meditation on the great statements of the Veda may be usefully noted. In this perspective of the Word, the existence and vitality of the non-Christian religions is not an embarrassment. Their discovery of the Word through internal experience or through historical vicissitudes only complements and confirms the authenticity of the revealed Word proclaimed by the Church. They demonstrate the common search of all humanity for the saving word of God. As the Rgvedic hymn states, all have some experience of the word, in speech, grammar, poetry and ritual; but it is really discovered only in the heart of the sage and realized only by one to whom the Word discloses herself.

The true uniqueness of Christianity, however, is in its insistence on the unity of the human family, the unity of its history, and the transformation of that history by the entry into it of the Word of God made flesh as its focus and directive principle. This fact cannot be a matter of indifference to other religions. If there is a God, he is God also for the atheist. If Jesus of Nazareth is truly the Son of God made son of man, and Saviour of all men, as Christians believe, he is a fact also for the Hindus and Buddhists, in whatever way they may choose to recognize that fact. That one group of people may want to approach it through history, another through myth and magic, and yet a third through dance and play, will not affect the objective value of the fact and its real meaning for all men. Religions will not be true to their own religious ideal of truth,

if they refuse to examine and acknowledge such a fact so vital to all men. Knowledge of God as the ultimate ground and source of man's being and vision of the Incarnation as the Omega point to which all phenomenal reality including all history and man's own personal being reach up to, form the two poles of all religious experience. For Christians these two poles are made concrete by the experience of the Trinity of God, on the one hand, and the celebration of the Risen Lord in the Liturgy, on the other.

The Christian Church, however, cannot claim to be the sole depository of truth over against other religions. It can arrive at the fullness of truth and be truly Catholic only to the extent that it is willing to recognize truth wherever it is found and to accept the service to Truth rendered by other religions. As Vatican II clearly acknowledges other religions also have developed unique ways for arriving at the fundamental truths of religion. They have disclosed depths and dimensions of the divine reality that are of great significance to all men. Christianity cannot afford to reject them.

The missionary task today

The imperative need today to affirm the common search of religions shows that the Christian missionary cannot be a mere salesman for the Gospel. He must shed all appearance of proselytism and propaganda. His task is to play his unique role in humanity's common search for truth and salvation for all men. Christianity and the other religions should not be taken as rival claimants to the allegiance of the same people, but rather as collaborators in the universal salvific plan of God for all men. The kernel and centre of the Good News of salvation proclaimed by Christ is the "great gift of God which is liberation from everything that oppresses man, above all liberation from sin and the Evil One, in the joy of knowing God and being known by Him, of seeing Him and of being given over to Him".⁹ Evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new.¹⁰ This work is done

9. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* § 9

10. *Ibid* § 18.

not by external pressure and persuasion and the subtle techniques of mass media, but by the penetrating power of truth, or as Paul VI puts it, "solely through the divine power of the message".¹¹

This is not the task of a lone individual, the missionary: "It is the whole church that receives the mission to evangelize."¹² This collective character of missionary work includes in it the followers of other religions too as coworkers and partners. Just as they "have the right to know the riches of the Mystery of Christ",¹³ so also their heritage of deeply religious texts and the fruits of thousands of years of searching for God is the common patrimony of all men.

Conclusions

From this common missionary task of religions to work for the salvation of all men, certain definite conclusions follow:

(1) Mission work should be considered primarily as the forthright proclamation of the word of truth one has received as a trust, a confirmation of the same by the witness of one's personal life and a sincere dedication of oneself to the service of others. Hence all missionary activity should find its ultimate meaning in that absolute and ultimate Being who calls us into life, sustains, supports and surrounds our life, whether one labels it as God, or refuses to give it any name at all, or even rejects its existence under the pretext that it would deny freedom and ultimate meaning to human life. This last denial of the Ultimate is in fact an emphatic affirmation of an Ultimate Meaning, which actually is what God stands for, for the believers. Vatican II has clearly stated this common ground of missionary work: "Missionary activity is nothing else and nothing less than a manifestation or epiphany of God's will, and the fulfilment of that will in the world and in world history." (*Ad Gentes* § 9)

(2) An important task, therefore, of evangelization is to liberate mission work from all cultural, geographical and political stereotypes. It must simply be the mission from God to men, to transform and make whole the life of all men. Religious

11. *Ibid*

12. *Ibid* § 15.

13. *Ibid* § 53.

conversion should be freed from all taint of a conquest of one group by another, the domination of one culture or tradition over another. Evangelization is the flowering and fulfilment of all cultures and traditions in the experience of the saving Word. So everything that smacks of a rejection or betrayal of one's past culture, family, religion and tradition should be removed from conversion. Since truth cannot contradict truth, it must be possible for one to be a genuine Hindu or Buddhist and an authentic Christian at the same time.

(3) The first and immediate task of evangelization today in India which belongs to the third World is for the missionary and the church to identify themselves with the struggle of the people "to overcome everything that condemns them to remain on the margin of life: famine, chronic disease, illiteracy, poverty, injustices in international relations and especially in commercial exchanges, situations of economic and cultural neo-colonialism, sometimes as cruel as the old political colonialism".¹⁴ In this struggle all religions can work together for the liberation of the whole man, evangelization and human development are intimately connected.¹⁵

(4) Dialogue and collaboration with men of other faiths is an important part of missionary activity. Often the missionary has been so far carried away by his enthusiasm to communicate his message through propaganda, preaching and all other available means that he failed to listen to the Spirit working in and speaking through the evangelized or take seriously the problems preempting his attention at the moment. Or meeting a man of another faith and failing to understand his religious language a missionary simply stops short at the frontier with a polite, indifferent exchange of inanities. What is needed is an honest meeting of hearts and minds and wills about issues of deep concern for both parties. The Christian must be willing to put himself in the place of the Hindu and the Muslim, and the latter to undertake the same empathic identification with the Christian or Buddhist brother.

14. *Ibid* § 30.

15. *Ibid* § 31.

(5) But man's problems cannot simply be reduced to the economic and socio political levels. The task of religion is to affirm the primacy of man's spiritual vocation and make man rise above his material needs, which can never be fully satisfied. In this question of the relation between man's material needs and spiritual goals different religions look at man from different angles, though their approaches may be considered convergent to a certain extent. Still, there are wide gaps and blind spots which cannot be glossed over by those who have the salvation of the whole man in view. Over against religious traditions that deal with man almost as if he were a pure spirit, neglecting his bodily and social existence, Christianity affirms the unity of man consisting of soul and body, spirit and matter forming a single being. Besides, man is a social being, and the social institutions and structures he sets up have a deep influence on his life. Hence an important part of Christian missionary work is to conscientize people on the social aspect of man's salvation and to work towards building up "structures that are more human, more just, more respectful of the rights of the person and less oppressive and less enslaving."

(6) But religion should go even beyond social structures to the transcendent unity of all in the Lord. Hence even the Church should not absolutize itself but must remain the sign and sacrament of the Risen Lord who has become a "quickening spirit" for all men in a new existence. The Eucharistic assembly that celebrates the glorified body of Christ in the sacramental banquet best represents this transcendent and provisional character of the Church in her mission to evangelize all peoples, nations and individuals.

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Towards an Indian Theology of Liberation

1. A theology of liberation

Anyone who attempts to speak of theology of liberation in the Indian context is brought up short by the fact that India has for millennia been concerned with what we would call "theologies of liberation". The temptation today may be to dismiss all that ancient lore on the grounds that the pursuit of liberation envisaged in the Upanisadic tradition had little or nothing in common with the aspirations of liberation theologians of today: on the one hand it is said, far from involving radical changes in social structures to bring about the integral human freedom of the masses, it was indissolubly bound up with structures which kept them in subjection; and on the other hand the liberation aimed at consisted in the total emancipation of the small social elite who were its beneficiaries not merely from restrictions on their freedom within the human conditions, but from the human condition itself, by removal of the necessity of rebirth:

"He who lives thus through out the length of life reaches the Brahma world, and does not return hither again - yea, he does not return hither again" (Chh. Up. 8.15.)

Nevertheless I do not think we can afford so lightly to dismiss as outmoded and irrelevant a world-view which, with many richly-varied nuances, still forms the ways of thinking and reacting, conscious or unconscious, of the vast majority of Indians, even if it had not valuable insights to offer us, as I believe it has. I was, I must confess, appalled at the almost total lack of awareness of the immense importance of Hinduism as a living force in contemporary India which was shown at the conference on "Theologizing in India Today" held in Pune a year or two ago. I am not referring only to militant or strictly orthodox Hindu groups: even those most affected by the scientific or pseudo-scientific humanism with agnostic overtones

which is eating away at inherited values and thought patterns in the minds of the western-educated are still deeply influenced by the ancient archetypes. (The same is also true of the Christian minority to a far greater extent than the Churches seem aware of.) If we hope to catch the attention of the masses of our people, educated or uneducated, we would do well to remember the warning of the Tao:

“Woe to him who wilfully innovates
while ignorant of the constant.”

If anyone doubts this, let him collect a group of apparently modern, sophisticated and blasé Hindu students and settle down to a reflection on the text of the Kena Upanisad or the Gita to see whether it can still bear the weight of living. If he knows how to pick up their wave-length, he will soon understand what I mean. And a friend of mine who was working to introduce social change in the villages of Thamil Nadu told me how at first all efforts had failed because the approach had been to try to get the villagers to give up their traditional beliefs and popular religiosity in favour of new, scientific ideas: only when he realized that it was necessary to start where they were and introduce new concepts in terms of their actual mind-set was it possible to make any headway.

Let us then reflect for a moment on what Gustavo Gutierrez has to say about theology as “wisdom, rational knowledge and critical reflection on praxis” in juxtaposition with the traditional Upaniṣadic “way” of *sravana, manana* and *nidhidhyasana* - that is, listening to the revealed word which alone makes known the *parampuruṣartha*, the supreme goal of human life, serious reflection on it, and silently allowing oneself to be transformed by that word. Let us also remember that this “way” could be embarked upon only after a serious commitment on the part of the disciple to undertake a radical and ongoing reform of his value-system and life-style. If - a point to which I shall return later - that the Vedantic tradition overstresses the “other-worldly” dimension of liberation, and puts insufficient emphasis on what Gutierrez calls its anthropological aspects, including that of human solidarity, there is nonetheless a common insistence on the essential interaction between knowledge and transformation of life, praxis and reflection. It is worth noting too that Gutierrez observes with approval that it is “the

rediscovery of the eschatological dimension in theology" that "has... led us to consider the central role of historical praxis... Indeed", he says "if human history is above all an opening to the future, then it is a task, a political occupation, through which man orients and opens himself to *the gift which gives history its transcendent meaning*: the full and definitive encounter with the Lord and with other men". (italics mine)

In India, then, if we want to be understood correctly, we should probably speak of a *marga* or *way* rather than a theology of liberation, bearing in mind also that one of the earliest terms for the teaching of the apostles of Jesus, much of which would certainly seem to qualify as liberation theology, was simply "*the way*"¹.

2. ... of liberation

Theology of liberation in its authentic forms envisages the *integral* liberation of man, and not Man in the abstract, but man as he is here and now in a given point in time and a specific cultural context. (*Ad Gentes* explicitly advocates the stirring up of theological reflection in major socio-cultural areas, which obviously implies a plurality of mutually complementary

1) Cf. Acts 9: 2; 16: 17; 18: 26; 19: 9 and 23; 22: 4; 24: 14 and 22. With regard to the objections sometimes made against liberation theologians' insistence on the priority of praxis over theory, I am inclined to think this is largely a false problem. There must obviously be both experience and reflection on experience, and the two necessarily interact. We receive the Word of God as human beings already experiencing our condition. I think what they are quite rightly rejecting is theory carried out in almost total abstraction from the realities of human existence. On the other hand the protagonists of a theology evolved "by the people" need to bear in mind that we cannot write off entirely the experience and reflection of past generations on the Word of God: there is still room for scientific theology though as Karl Rahner notes "there is no sharp distinction to be drawn between pre-scientific and scientific intelligence of the faith" (Concise Theological Dictionary, p. 456).

theologies).² It will necessarily be conditioned in each case by the dimensions of human life in which the need for liberation is felt most acutely at that point in time and space, human need and word of God mutually calling upon and illumining each other. It will also be strongly coloured by the temperamental characteristics and value-systems of the people among whom it develops, their habitual ways of looking at and interpreting life, their capacity for change and dynamic action. Father A. Pieris s. j. makes some interesting points in this connection in his paper "Towards an Asian Theology of Liberation" published in *Vidya Jyoti* for July 1979, notably regarding the Asian acceptance as a value of inner freedom from the desire to possess as a value, so that "the antonym for Wealth in Asia is not poverty but acquisitiveness or avarice which makes wealth anti-religious".³ One of the most formative experiences of my own life in this area of human liberation was to participate during our 1976 Chapter in a sharing by continents of how we each experienced "justice" and "injustice" in terms of the concrete situations in our own country, and what action we felt we should take. Even among the five Asian countries represented there were naturally differences, but we were powerfully struck by the sharp contrast between Asia and Latin America when each continent presented its findings to the whole Chapter: the Latin Americans spoke vehemently of vigorous action to root out economic inequality and oppression in every form: everything was sharply black or white, with no nuances. Asia on the other hand was acutely aware of the ambiguities of the problem. Each country seemed to see its own situation in terms of the parable of the cockle among the wheat, which was explicitly quoted, and felt that slower, more patient methods would prove more effective in the long run. In contrast with the Latin American approach, their presentation could be likened to a Japanese water-colour, one delicate tint shading into the next. (My concern here is not to commend either attitude, merely to note the difference! It is

2) Cf. *Ad Gentes*, No. 22.

3) He goes on: "*The primary concern therefore (in an Asian situation) is not eradication of poverty, but struggle against Mammon - that indefinable force which organizes itself within every man and among men to make material wealth anti-human, anti-religious and oppressive*". (ib. p. 268; italics in the original)

perhaps worth adding that I was the only member of the Asian group who was not an Asian by birth).

3. ... for India

What then are the chief dimensions of human life in India in which liberation is today a felt need? (It may be helpful to bear in mind in attempting to answer this question the distinction between awareness of a need and belief in the possibility of liberation from it. The awakening to awareness of this possibility is probably in many cases itself one of the greatest needs...)

a) To the casual observer, the most obvious field for liberating action in India is that of *economic poverty*, in many cases amounting to destitution, and privation of the most elementary biological or physical necessities: adequate food, clean water, clothing, housing, resulting in ill-health, inability to get or hold a job, lack of even basic education for children and adults, lack of any real hope of improving the situation.

b) If we go more deeply into the causes of economic need, we immediately come up against the peculiar and all-pervading *social system* of India, the caste distinctions and centuries-long prejudices and antipathies, fears, inferiority complexes and attitudes of ingrained arrogance on the one hand and ingrained apathy on the other, which have resulted in what one could almost call genetic mutations, so deep-rooted and instinctive have they become. I have observed the effects of this in friends of both high caste and no caste; even where there is a conscious desire not to be influenced of them, and this has been admitted to me, though it is only fair to say that I have met shining instances of such freedom.

c) All this means that it would not be enough to change the social structures involved by legislation (there is ample proof of this in the ineffectiveness of the legal outlawing of caste discrimination: it will first be necessary to achieve liberation on the *psychological level*). Probably the two freedoms will have to grow simultaneously, but the process will necessarily begin in each case within an individual psyche and gradually spread to others.

d) Closely related to the above but reaching out to other spheres of human life is the unfreedom of *superstition* and *emotional bondage to religious beliefs and traditions* which in many cases no longer seem relevant or intelligible, but nevertheless frequently impose certain rigid patterns of behaviour and often crushing financial burdens which aggravate the inhuman conditions of life already referred to. Thus *superstition* and *respect for tradition* combine with human respect and fear of reprisals from gods or men for inadequate performance to perpetuate the folly of the dowry system and will extravagance at weddings and other religious ceremonies, leading to crippling debts and years of mental anguish.

e) The *industrial revolution*, though it has put hitherto undreamt of amenities of life within the reach of many, especially in the cities, has also created its own problems and led to new forms of slavery. One has only to look at the slums in the same cities, to observe the conditions of work and pay-scales if the workers in many "flourishing" concerns, to listen to the educated unemployed who cannot get jobs commensurate with their qualifications and are too "status-conscious" to accept even for a time whatever they can get. Needs and demands have been created which cannot possibly be met in the hard realities of the situation. So we have the exodus abroad of the more well-to-do young and gifted, and the vicious circle remains unbroken.

f) The vague scientific humanism which is replacing traditional spiritual and religious values in the minds of the younger middle aged and rising generations is another phenomenon which undermines human freedom and responsibility by creating a mental confusion which makes true choice impossible: many young people today are acutely aware of their lack of clear principles or guide-lines for living, and a sense of purpose in life, and they recognise this situation, however dimly, as a diminution of their human dignity. They also resent it. The best of them are highly critical of the social conditions prevailing, including the educational system, impatient with caste distinctions (at least till the time of their marriage approaches!) and genuinely anxious to do something to alleviate injustice, especially in the rural areas, when they become conscious of its existence. It is

encouraging to note that a small but increasing number of young graduates are devoting themselves to this kind of work, even settling after marriage in villages to work with the people to improve their condition. In general, however, there is an immense need for challenge, guidance, encouragement to think and seek a sense of direction and work out a satisfactory philosophy of life - *a need in short for truth or awareness of reality.*

g) The political scene offers evidence of yet another form of slavery - to *ambition and the lust for power* which (and not only in politics) overmasters all considerations of moral principle and social responsibility. Akin to this is the all-pervading corruption, partly the result of economic "necessity", partly due to family and other social pressure ("She's my cousin sister", "He's my boss") which in practice compels even those who want to be honest to sacrifice their integrity under pain of losing their jobs and seeing their families go hungry, or at least of missing a much-needed and deserved promotion.

h) With regard to the liberation of *women* the situation in India is somewhat complex. In general the women of each social group naturally share the disadvantages suffered by the group as a whole, but with the extra vulnerability peculiar to women: e. g., girls suffer bitterly because of the dowry system and the worry their marriage entails for their parents, and women tend to be used as an instrument of oppression by land-lords and others. There is nevertheless a quite considerable awakening on the subject of woman's dignity and role in society. Foreign proponents of "women's lib" sometimes criticize what they see as the servile submissiveness of Asian women, I suspect that deeper familiarity with the psychology of Hindu women would give them pause. As a dear friend of mine said to me lately, "I think here are two kinds of submissiveness, the submissiveness that is just renunciation and the submission that is done in *love*. That is the submission that liberates". I have also been told more than once with a certain measure of pride by Hindu friends that one great difference between the women's movement in India and in the West is that "our men are with us!" I must say that from what I have seen of the *Stree Shakti* movement this seems to be largely true.

4. Freedom fighters

Before attempting to reflect in the light of the Gospel on these aspects of life in which liberation is needed, it may be useful to look for a moment at some of the efforts towards liberation already being made in different parts of the country and under different forms of inspiration, as they also could provide pointers for an Indian theology of liberation. Here too I shall limit myself to situations and persons with which I have had personal contact.

To begin with one of the earliest and most widespread – the Gandhian movement with its various ramifications – the sarvodaya movement, the Kasturba Trust for the liberation of women and children, the *Stree Shakti* movement, seeking to make both men and women conscious of their responsibility to work for a society based on truth and love by peaceful means, using the power of patient non-violent perseverance, or *Stree Shakti*, to achieve social change which is found in both men and women, but more especially in women. It has become fashionable in recent years to decry Gandhiji's ideas as impracticable, partly in reaction against the adultery lip-service without follow-up that has done so much to discredit his vision, and partly as a result of honest recognition that some of his ideas were impracticable. Nevertheless personal contact with many of his followers has convinced me that, while allowing for a fair measure of human weakness, we must concede that they do very often live the Gospel values which we only too often seem to content ourselves with preaching. I was deeply impressed by the accounts given by the most ordinary-looking women of the very significant results they have achieved all over the country, without hitting the headlines, by determined, peaceful, practical action. And I was compelled to re-examine my own attitude to the question of "conscientization" when Sushila Didi of Paunar asked me if I knew of any women in other Asian countries who would be interested in coming to the Viswa Sammelan. "Yes" said I glibly. "I know some sisters in the Philippines who would I am sure come if they could: they are doing a great deal to make people aware of their own rights." She pounced on me at once. "That is the great difference between you (i. e. Christians) and us", she said, "You always insist on people's rights: we always begin with *duties*". And she

went on to tell me how insisting first on rights led to anger, hatred, bitterness and, in the case of failure, which must often come, frustration and despair. "Of course we go on to help them to see their rights too", she said, "but first we ask them what they think they should do, and how they can do it so as not to destroy love and respect for human life and dignity." I am not quoting verbatim, but that was the gist of what she said. I sat and listened mentally unreceptive. "How practical is all this?" I asked myself. On my homeward journey, like Paul going to Damascus, I was suddenly blinded by light. "Good heavens!" I said, "which is the more evangelical attitude, hers or mine?"

In Maharashtra, I have a very good friend, European-born but now an Indian citizen, and married to a Brahmin, who has been working for a number of years on a government-sponsored project among Harijan students, and has more recently been training some of them to be animators of social change in their own villages. His philosophy is a fusion of Gandhianism and the ideas of Paolo Freire (which he finds have to be re-interpreted in concrete terms as they are unintelligible to his students as they stand). He also works in a pacific manner, is totally opposed to violence unless it is forced upon him when he would not rule it out altogether, and has rather significantly moved from a negative attitude to the ancient Saritic culture which he tended to dismiss as "brahminism" responsible for all the problems of his students and their families were faced with, to a realization that there are elements in the old traditions which are of permanent value and should not be destroyed, but made available to all. He and his wife work as a team and have a steady constructive influence.

In another area of Maharashtra, a small group of my own sisters has been living for some years among the Warli tribe, not to impose new ways upon them but to "learn the Warlis" as they put it, in order to be able to help them to introduce such changes as they themselves want, to bring themselves into a more organic relationship with modern Indian society without losing their own cultural values. A number of other groups are active in the same area, seeking from variety of motives to "liberate" the Warlis. My sisters have told me that

they are totally convinced from bitter experience that any active encouragement of violence or vengeance is doomed to failure and does more harm than good. To begin with, the oppressors are physically stronger and are bound to win in a show of strength; to go on with, "we release forces of violence and hate that they themselves cannot control, and that are worked up and fomented by others for ends we would want to have nothing to do with. The only possible way for us as Christians is to help them to work for justice with love and compassion, not hatred."

Another of our sisters, Gladys D'Souza, is working whole-time for justice from an educational angle. She and Father Gabriel Gonsalves, s. j., are collaborating in the National Adult Education programme at the request of the Union Ministry of Education. They are also producing text-books for schools that will they hope help to form social consciousness in children through the medium of ordinary school subject. Some have been afraid of these programmes on the ground that they will stir up class hatred and bitterness among students. Her experience has been quite otherwise. Having gone through the answers of some boys and girls to a questionnaire given to them after completing one course I would myself corroborate this though may be in future texts it would be good to bear in mind the tendency of the young to make too simple generalizations and to counteract this somehow in the interests of truth and charity lest all the virtues be attributed to all the poor and all the vices to all the rich. Her intention is to awaken a deep concern and sense of responsibility combined with understanding of the causes of oppression, and, as someone has said in another context, "hatred of the sin with compassion for the sinner" who is himself in need of healing. Some religious congregations are now using these texts in their formation programmes, integrating meditation and action in an apostolic spirituality founded on reality. Sister Gladys has told me that she now carefully avoids using the term "conscientization" as it has for many a connotation of incitement to violence and hate which is emphatically not her aim, as she

considers them both self-defeating and unchristian. She too draws inspiration from Gandhiji as well as from the Gospel.⁴

In the Ahmednagar District our congregation has worked for nearly twenty years to give the girls of Haregaon and the District a sense of their own dignity and power for good. Here more than anywhere I have realized the immensity of the problems resulting from centuries of oppression and the damage it can do to human beings, and also the marvellous resources of human nature and its responsiveness to love and trust, as well as the terrible bitterness and destructiveness that can be awakened by the desire for revenge. And I have learnt how disastrous it can be to "help" people from above, so to speak, (especially with foreign aid) instead of encouraging them patiently to develop their own resources. I think all the Christian Churches in the district have now learnt, or are painfully learning, - and missionaries are being told it to their faces if they have not seen it for themselves - that the kind of dependence created by many of the well-meant efforts to "bring up" newly-formed Christian communities in the past have had the quite unforeseen effect of creating a kind of alienation which is now a serious spiritual, psychological and social handicap to the very people it was meant to liberate...⁵

5. The word of God and the Indian situation

When I was pondering on all this and wondering what was its specific point of contact with the Gospel, I suddenly remembered Jesus before Pilate: "For this was I born, and for

4) It may be of interest to note that the same texts are now being used in a diocesan major seminary in Uganda as a basis for a course in pastoral care. A seminarian wrote: "It has enabled me to know that leadership demands love, humility and co-operation with the people you are leading, and that this must be expressed clearly in my day-to-day living."

5) I was privileged to be present some months ago at a conference on The Church in India, Past, Present and Future, organized at the Spiritual Life Centre, Nasrapur, for a number of Christian Churches. Most of the time I was the only "Roman" present. I found it most illuminating though most of the proceedings were in torrential Marathi!

this I came into the world - to bear testimony of the truth"⁶ and those other words of his from the same Gospel of John came into my mind: "The *truth* shall make you free."⁷ "This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you." It struck me that this might well be a prophetic word (theology after all has a prophetic function) especially as the search for Truth or Reality has always characterized India's search for liberation - and the motto of independent India is "*Satyam eva jayate*". We have already recalled that the new society of Gandhi's vision rested on the double foundation of truth and love. Many years ago, when I asked the holy old Tamil poet Muruganar in the ashram at Tiruvannamalai to give me a word for my students, he said slowly: "Tell them to look into their own hearts. Every man carries the truth within his own heart. Tell them to look within."

Looking back over all the areas of un-freedom I have mentioned, and the actual experience and gradual growth in understanding of those I know who have attempted to cope with them, it seems to me that a liberation theology for India must in fact start from this basic conviction that freedom must first take root in the individual human heart in the truth of his own being. This is in fact what the Hindu tradition has said from the beginning, corroborated by the Buddhist experience: freedom is communicated, or rather awakened, on a person to person basis; and what is love but self communication in truth? Moreover, according to the same tradition, freedom can only be rooted in a profound experience of the ultimate Mystery, Source and Goal of all created being. No man can be truly free in this life who has not experienced the radically ephemeral character of all that is, including himself in his own limited individuality, apart from That which alone is⁸. A liberation theology for India surely

6) Jn. 18: 37.

7) Jn. 8: 32.

8) Though most clearly expressed in the Vedantin tradition - including Ramanuja and Madhava who are fully aware of the radical dependence of all limited being on the ultimate Reality - this conviction underlies also the whole of popular Hindu religiosity and the basic assumptions about human life of "ordinary" people. I was in fact very much struck in reading

needs to take into account this deep and abiding conviction of the Indian mind, bringing it into challenging relation with Jesus who stands before us as the word become man taking as done to himself all that is done to the least of his fellow-men, and yet said that his kingdom was not of this world and died a failure, humanly speaking, rather than defend himself against an unjust accusation. Perhaps one of the contributions of an Indian theology of liberation to international reflection will be to recall with peculiar force that the *parampuruṣartha* is not to be expected in the form of a millennium in this world, and yet paradoxically it is already present in the heart of man, at least in seed: "the kingdom of heaven is within you, the kingdom of heaven is among you..."⁹

A Christophany

It is a matter of common - and current - experience that India responds instinctively to a great man or woman more readily than to an ideology or abstract principle. So perhaps a liberation theology for India must draw inspiration not from a Christology, but from a Christophany - a Christophany of the death of the Lord, hanging in tension between all extremes, his heart the centre of the universe as of the cross, the source for man of the liberating Spirit. It has been said that "the Spirit is always in the middle", holding all things in creative tension, keeping the balance. Perhaps a liberation theology for India needs to keep the balance between the truth of man's finite being on this earth, his social character and terrible responsibility for his brothers, and the truth of his rootedness in a Mystery beyond all name and form in comparison with which all flesh is as grass and a dream that passes in the night. The liberation theologies of India's past tended to stress the latter dimension of his being, to the near-exclusion of the former: may be some of the liberation theologians of the west tend to go to the opposite extreme in natural reaction against the pie in the sky"

the work of a young Dalit Panther poet to discover how deeply he was influenced by traditional Hindu religious symbolism, interwoven very effectively with images drawn from modern life. Unfortunately the book is not to hand.

9) Lk. 7: 21.

theologies of the past. The experience of those engaged in concrete contemporary efforts at liberation in India seems to suggest that in actual fact no one can really help modern man at grips with his oppressive situations who has not himself won his freedom by facing and accepting the essentially ephemeral character of human existence on the earth, and of the earth itself. And yet not all men can summon up the heroism necessary to find the Marxist vision of a millennium for future generations sufficient to sustain their spirits in face of failure, sickness and death. There is however the unanimous affirmation of Upanishadic, Islamic and Christian faith that ultimate meaning does not lie there, but in "That from which speech turns back, together with the mind, being unable to reach it". And the Upaniṣad adds: "He who knows the bliss of that Brahman fears nothing." I have been repeatedly told by my most active friends "in the field" that without a deeply contemplative habit of prayer they would never have the courage to take or persevere in their stand for justice, and I fully believe them.

The hard conclusion seems to be that it is our lives, and not our words, that must provide a theology of liberation for the India of our time, a Christophany of the Lord in tension with arms outstretched in compassionate love, the victim and challenger of violence, not its instigator. It is sometimes thought-and said - that to remain in the middle is to take the line of least resistance, a soft option. Let anyone who believes this try to remain in the middle between contending groups, confronting, however gently, the oppressor with his oppression and the oppressed with his bitterness and hate. Let a member of a quarrelling family refuse to take sides, attempting to make both parties see reason and take the first step to reconciliation, or a delegate to a general chapter insist that it is necessary today both to intensify efforts to help the very poor, involving new forms of outreach and non institutionalized apostolate, and at the same time that it would be a sin against justice to abandon altogether ministries to "those who are so poor that they have nothing but money", as Cardinal Pironio described them to one such chapter, and they will know what I mean.

The implication for us collectively as Church or Churches is that here too we should observe the folly of the cross and

follow the path of poverty and weakness. "He emptied himself", being found in the likeness of those he came to set free, the "middle way" of the Spirit, avoiding exclusive identification with any one class, even the economically oppressed. The Son of man came to save sinners, who are often, though not exclusively, the rich and the publicans. It is true of course that we have probably never consciously intended to identify ourselves exclusively with either the rich or the poor, but we have an appalling reputation for being predominantly pro rich, and who can wonder at it? I personally do not think we can hope to come anywhere near an Indian theology of liberation that will not make us a laughing-stock to the world until we can bring ourselves to forget all our preconceived ideas about life-style and status befitting "religious" or "educated people" or however we like to think of ourselves, and simply be among our fellow-men the *murti* of the terrible love and compassion of God.

Sara Grant

(From Xavier Irudayaraj's paper on
"Understanding of Salvation in Tamil Saivite
Tradition—Saiva Siddhanta")

Dialogue with Saiva Siddhanta

1. Certain observations

Looking at the world-view and salvation in Saiva Siddhanta, it is important to remember that neither the Scriptures nor reason nor experience of the world alone taken each by itself, can give complete certitude for the triple Reality - *Pati* (Lord), *Pasu* (soul), *Pasam* (bondage). For they have to be taken together in providing evidence for these eternal realities.

Now, it is our duty to observe whether the Siddhanta world-view and Salvation do justice to all the facts of our experience or slurs over any of them.

a) Rightly does the Siddhantin start with the world in which we live; the world which comes into existence, persists for a time and goes out of existence. Realistically does he find it necessary to affirm the existence of bondage since it is a fact of our lives. But he declares that the bondage is beginningless, although he grants that it is difficult, even impossible to say how it originated. Here arises the question of Creation and Time; also the consequent problem of the concept of time and eternity presents itself. If one pursues these questions in dialogue, the Siddhantin would say that, admitting the existence of the bondage, the question is how to overcome it. For, to him the enquiries into the unknown origins seem not only impossible but irrelevant.

b) The second observation is about the triumph of grace in the process of liberation, that seems to play down the freedom and responsibility of the soul. If one understands correctly the Siddhanta position, the problem is not how to reconcile grace and freedom, but how to understand freedom and grace. For, the Siddhantin sees freedom not in the choices one is called to make, but in reaching the goal or in reaching the Feet of the Lord; in other words, he finds his true freedom in the realization of the true relation found in 'advaita' union. And the grace of *jñana* is bestowed to realize this final union with the Lord.

Hence to a Siddhantin the acceptance of an eternal hell is unintelligible. For, in his perspective, the soul could be truly itself only in union with the Lord. He considers the freedom of the moral choices relative and temporary, while the freedom conferred by grace to reach 'advaita' union absolute and undeniable. Only when the destiny of the soul is considered to be decided by moral choices, option becomes absolute; but when the realization of the soul's union with the Lord is seen depending upon the grace of *jñana*, there is only one attainable goal which alone guarantees ultimate freedom of being oneself.

2. Salient features

Among the Hindu traditions, Saiva Siddhanta has made a unique contribution in seeing *Mukti* in two aspects i. e. (i) breaking of bondages (*Pasa Vitu*), (ii) union with the Lord (*Siva-Peru*). These two aspects consequently fuse together both *jñana* and *bhakti* in *Mukti*; through the grace of *jñana*, the soul breaks the

bondage and in love it enjoys the bliss; *jñana* makes the union true and *bhakti* renders it blissful. Thus, Siddhanta understanding of *Mukti* gives a clue to see life both in personal and (supra) 'beyond-personal' aspects. It is the intuitive experience of the fusion of *jñana* and *bhakti* that has led the mystics of Siddhanta to expose the doctrine of 'suddha advaita' union.

Another salient feature of Siddhanta is its focus on the divine pedagogy in the process of liberating the soul. Though unopposed to the approach of the history of salvation, Siddhanta highlights certain points which could be considered as complementary to the historical perspectives.

For example, insisting on the divine pedagogy, Siddhanta offers a more satisfactory explanation on the uniqueness of each one's experience in life and the singularity of each soul's union with the Lord in *Mukti*. True, the historical approach brings to light the solidarity and unity of mankind. But the Siddhantin wonders- 'Is not life too short to realize oneself and is it not too long to suffer eternally!'. It is relevant, here, to listen to a scholar and devotee of Siddhanta: "It may be that the Hindu's historical sense is a peculiar one, taking in much larger stretches of time than are usually taken into account....; secular events of any one life either cannot find a place or can find but a microscopic place in such history as he records."

What stands out clearly in such an approach is the spiritual evolution and growth of the soul with many lapses and backslidings but working towards a happy fulfilment.

Conclusion

In general, one would say that Saiva Siddhanta, together with other Hindu traditions, presents a different picture of world-view and Salvation vis-à-vis the Christian world-view and salvation. We could point out the underlying differences in the two approaches in the following manner:

(Hindu) *Siddhanta*

Ontological	- in approach
Truth	- in concern
Jnana (grace)	- in means
Mystical	- in witness
Endless	- in goal

Christian

- Historical
- Holiness
- Charity (Grace)
- Prophetic
- Eschatological

Of course one cannot imply that the one approach excludes the other. However, as it is evident, there is a different emphasis with a particular accent and tonality in each tradition. Especially, in the 'historical' approach, there is a striking tension between time and eternity, while in the 'ontological', time and eternity seem to fuse and coalesce. Yet the basic common conviction on grace in both the approaches seems to bring them together in dialogue.

In particular, Siddhanta world-view and Salvation have a special significance. It consists in seeking the Reality and Mukti in terms of 'advaita' relation. For, to a Siddhantin, God is one with the soul in bondage; in Mukti the soul is one with God. By affirming both identity (oneness) and union in Mukti Siddhanta succeeds in presenting an integral vision of the liberation of the soul, as it includes both becoming God and being oneself.

In fine, it would be relevant to cite Cittiyar who expresses clearly the attitude of siddhantins towards other traditions and to their own convictions: "Religions and postulates and text books are various, and conflict one with the other. It is asked which is the true religion, which the true postulate, and which the true book. That is the true Religion... book, which not conflicting with this or that comprises reasonably everything within its own folds" (8. 13).

Indeed, the author seems to voice a complementary approach in formulating an integral world view and salvation.